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Jeudi
16 novembre 2023

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 16 novembre 2023

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LESS RED TAPE, MORE
COMMON SENSE ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023
POUR PLUS DE BON SENS ET MOINS
DE FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES

Mr. Gill moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Hon. Parm Gill: I'm pleased to lead off third reading on our fall red tape reduction bill, the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, 2023.

When we formed government in 2018, Ontario was the most heavily regulated province in the country. We knew that had to change, and we've worked hard to make that happen, because regulatory burdens are barriers to Ontario's productivity, innovation and economic competitiveness and development, and unnecessary red tape doesn't help anyone. That's why our government's red tape reduction efforts since 2018 are now saving businesses, not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, universities and colleges, school boards and hospitals nearly \$950 million each year in regulatory compliance costs. When we add up all those annual savings year over year, we are approaching a total savings of nearly \$3 billion since 2018.

We have been able to achieve these savings by focusing on making practical and common-sense changes to remove burdens, common-sense changes like passing 10 high-impact red tape reduction bills in this Legislature, like implementing more than 500 burden-reduction actions such as regulation and policy changes and removing more than 20,000 individual regulatory compliance requirements that businesses would otherwise have to face. But we know this work is never complete. More can always be done to reduce the burdens that people and businesses face in their everyday lives.

Without an ongoing effort to track down wasteful, outdated or burdensome regulations, the number of regulations as well as the cost and time required to comply with them will only go up over time. That's why we will never stop working to improve government services and reduce red tape for people and businesses in our great province of Ontario.

The bill we are debating today, the proposed Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, is the 11th red tape reduction bill that we have put forward as government since 2018. It's focused on three key themes: improving services for people, reducing costs for businesses, and making it easier to work with government.

Make no mistake, reducing red tape is not just about counting the number of regulations and trying to reduce them. It's so much more than that. It's about the impact those changes are having on real people and businesses across our province, changes like improving government forms to reduce the paperwork demands on physicians, giving them more time to deliver the best care for patients; changes like creating more pathways into skilled trades and attracting more apprentices to in-demand trades, preparing Ontario's workforce for rewarding life long careers; and changes like enhancing consumer protections by ensuring consumers have the information they need to make informed decisions when buying and selling vehicles.

Speaker, I'm proud to say that the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act is the product of ongoing and continued collaboration across government, as well as extensive consultations with stakeholders across our province, to develop an unparalleled inventory of red tape reduction ideas. It's a key part of our fall 2023 red tape reduction package, which contains additional regulatory amendments and policy changes that contribute to a common goal of reducing red tape. This bill, if passed, would streamline processes and modernize outdated practices across several areas of government and multiple sectors of Ontario's economy, and continue to save the hard-working businesses within our province millions of dollars each year in compliance cost savings.

Speaker, we continue to find ourselves in uncertain economic times, and while Ontario has remained resilient, we cannot take anything for granted. That's why it's so important that we continue our efforts to streamline Ontario's regulatory climate to make it easier than ever to invest and do business in our province. A wide-reaching red tape reduction bill like this one simply isn't possible without the assistance of our partner ministries across government who best understand the issues that their sectors are facing and how we can implement solutions to solve them. I want to take a moment to thank our partner ministries for working together with us on this and help us continue towards our journey of becoming a modern and efficient province.

Our goal with the burden reduction initiatives we're putting forward today is to ensure that we no longer rely

on rules and regulations that are burdensome, inefficient and outdated, and that the ones we do rely on are current and enforced properly, predictably and consistently. I would like to take some time to talk about some of the individual items within the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, and how they will make life easier and better for people right across our province. The bill we're debating today includes 20 different schedules, and our complete fall 2023 red tape reduction package has 32 individual items, including regulatory and policy changes that complement the legislative changes found in the bill.

I want to begin by talking about some of the most impactful changes we have put forward in this package. During our second reading debate, I also spoke about how the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has challenged every province to act on reducing burden for physicians and across the health care system, and how Ontario is answering that call. Based on the latest Ontario Medical Association data, we know that physician burnout is a critical issue facing the health care system, and it is increasing at an alarming pace.

Physicians are spending too much time filling out unneeded and duplicative forms and paperwork. That's why we are working in collaboration with the Ontario Medical Association to review 12 key forms. Our goal is to streamline and simplify them, to minimize any duplication and identify opportunities for digital solutions. We are also committed to exploring even more forms and processes to improve moving forward. We estimate that the new and improved government forms and processes could free up as much as 95,000 hours per year. That's 95,000 hours we're giving back to physicians to help them manage their practices better and deliver the best care for their patients

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The president of the Ontario Medical Association Dr. Andrew Park has said this:

"Reducing and streamlining forms can help ease the significant amount of non-clinical work physicians perform each day.

"We recommended a review of unnecessary and cumbersome forms in our Prescription for Ontario: Doctors' Solutions for Immediate Action.

"We have been pleased with the collaboration between the OMA and the government on this and we look forward to continued momentum to address administrative burden.

"Our members are spending up to 20 hours of their work week completing administrative work and we hope these efforts will free up time to provide patient care and improve the quality of life for Ontario doctors."

Speaker, I think it's a very important initiative that will have a very large positive impact for Ontarians, and I look forward to continuing to move it forward in the coming months.

The Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act also includes another proposal from the Ministry of Health to streamline the submission requirements for generic drugs to improve treatment options for Ontarians who rely on life-saving drugs. We're proposing that drug manu-

facturers won't have to do a new clinical study for drugs that have been sold in Canada for a while and that have been proven to be safe and effective when applying for funding or interchangeability. Instead, they would be able to rely on evidence and information submitted to Health Canada to be approved for sale in the country. This means that Ontario would benefit from having access to a greater number of publicly funded generic drugs at a lower cost for their treatment needs.

Next, I would like to share a proposal from the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, who are preparing Ontario's workforce for rewarding and lifelong careers. Ontario is currently facing a labour shortage in the skilled trades due to job growth and retirement. We need to act, and we need to act now. That's why we're proposing regulatory amendments under the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act to enable Skilled Trades Ontario to officially collect and share certain data with the ministry. This data will be used to monitor trends and apprentices' registration exam success rates, and help us develop the best possible service delivery and attract more apprentices to in-demand trades, because attracting people to in-demand trades is essential to addressing labour shortages, fostering economic growth and ensuring a skilled workforce for the future.

As part of our broader package, we are also doing a review of the joint health and safety committee certification training standards. The review seeks opportunities to ensure streamlined requirements, eliminate duplication with other mandatory training and identify opportunities to reduce administrative barriers and costs. This will ensure that training remains relevant and practical, which will improve workplace safety and health to prevent workplace shortages due to injuries.

In addition to this, we are also improving our database of almost three million records for workers who have taken mandatory safety training as part of our strategy to make Ontario one of the safest places to work. The database is a key tool used by the ministry to foster safe workplaces. The new system will be a custom-built cloud-based database using government platforms to improve system and process efficiencies. The new system will be used by over 700,000 workers, employers and ministry personnel to verify that workers have taken training for working at heights or joint health and safety committee certifications. And it will offer training providers, workers and employers a better user experience by providing quick, easy, one-stop-shop access to thousands of training records.

Next, we have a proposal from the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery, who is proposing amendments to the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act. The proposal is the result of consultations made by the ministry on potential changes to the MVDA and its regulations in 2021, as well as the recommendations made by the Auditor General in her 2021 annual report. We are proposing legislative changes to address the Auditor General's 2021 audit recommendations, along with the proposals that were part of the summer 2021 consultations and emerging issues in the sector that resulted from the COVID-19 pan-

demic. Mostly, these are housekeeping changes to remove outdated transitional provisions that allow for fines for convictions under the previous MVDA to be payable under the current act.

We're also proposing to allow those who were registered under the previous MVDA to remain registered under the current act until the time of their next registration renewal, and we're proposing to increase the minimum fine for acting as a motor vehicle dealer or salesperson without being registered from \$2,500 to \$5,000.

Frank Notte, director of government relations for the Motor Vehicles Retailers of Ontario, said it best in his written submission to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy:

"Illegal, unlicensed vehicle dealers—commonly known as curbsiders—pose a danger to car buyers. Curbsiders disguise themselves as individuals selling vehicles privately—but often run underground businesses that sell stolen vehicles, vehicles with undisclosed accident repairs, and vehicles that were previously written off.

"According to the Ontario Motor Vehicle Industry Council—Ontario's vehicle sales regulator—curbsiders are responsible for approximately 30% of vehicles listed for sale by the owner. Moreover, OMVIC has laid more than 1,000 charges against alleged curbsiders and say that number has been increasing annually. This amendment to the MVDA is long overdue."

James Hamilton, interim manager and legal services director of the Used Car Dealers Association, agrees with this assessment, stating in their own submission to committee, "Curbsiders often pose as if they are selling their own personal vehicles and do so without any regard to the regulations and standards that licensed motor vehicle dealers and salespersons are required to follow.

"As noted, they misrepresent the condition of vehicles, sell stolen or unsafe cars and engage in other fraudulent activities, all of which harm unsuspecting purchasers. As they are not registered dealers, consumers who buy from curbsiders do not have access to the Motor Vehicle Dealers Compensation Fund for the losses that usually follow from such illegal sales.

"The UCDA believes that increasing the applicable penalties for breaches of the MVDA will help rein in the activities of curbsiders, discourage such individuals from engaging in illegal car sales, protecting unsuspecting consumers and will promote fair competition for illegitimate motor vehicle dealers and protect the industry as a whole. The UCDA unreservedly supports the changes to the MVDA proposed by Bill 139." Speaker, these proposed changes will help strengthen consumer protection and ensure all consumers have the information they need to make informed decisions when buying and selling vehicles, while at the same time reducing administrative burdens for the industry.

1440

While we're talking about transportation, I also want to highlight the work under way from the Ministry of Transportation to designate transit corridor lands for the

Hamilton light rail transit. Speaker, accelerating transit delivery is part of our government's plan to build new transit faster so people can get where they want to go when they want to get there. Better transit also creates more local jobs and is good, of course, for businesses and the economy. The designation will enable us to use all measures under the act to get shovels in the ground faster for this important project. Not only that, the project will also play a key role in the revitalization of Hamilton's urban environment. The LRT will be a 14-kilometre transit line that offers frequent and reliable connections to institutions and transit hubs including McMaster University, city hall, Tim Hortons Field, Eastgate Square and downtown Hamilton. It will transform the way that residents travel across the heart of the city and is another example of how our government is building transit, roads, highways and other key infrastructure across our great province.

Now I'd like to talk about the proposal that comes from the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. We're proposing legislative and regulatory changes to the Ontario Heritage Act which would make it easier and faster for faith groups to alter their places of worship to meet their unique needs. As it stands now, there are several requirements and wait times associated with making this type of a change to a heritage building. The changes we're proposing will mean application requirements would be significantly streamlined and municipalities would provide their acknowledgement of receipt within a shorter time frame. The proposal would also eliminate the potential that a faith group would need to appeal a denial or conditions on their request. This means that members of the faith groups can continue to practise their worship or spiritual practices with limited interruptions or complications.

Next, Madam Speaker, I'd like to share a proposal from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport to streamline approvals of St. Lawrence Parks easements. As it stands, routine easements to provide cable, natural gas, telephone, electricity, water or sewer access require approval from the LG in Council, and the current time for granting a routine easement can take anywhere from six to 12 months and sometimes even longer. As you can imagine, this greatly impedes agency operations and increases compliance costs. It also delays the construction of critical infrastructure like much-needed upgrades to outdated waste water and water infrastructure. That's why our proposed changes will streamline the process by removing the requirements for LG in Council approval and improve project delivery.

In addition to streamlining the approval processes, the proposed amendments are anticipated to save time and costs, which would enable the agency to better deliver on its mandate. What's more, Speaker, is that these changes will bring the requirements for the St. Lawrence Parks Commission in line with many similar provincial agencies, including nearly identical changes that were made in the spring red tape reduction bill for the Niagara Parks Commission.

And speaking of the great outdoors, I'd like to share a proposal coming from the Ministry of Natural Resources

and Forestry. We're proposing amendments to the overburdened and outdated permitting process of the Niagara Escarpment Program that has been in place since the 1970s. As a member from a riding that falls within the Niagara Escarpment area, I have heard from several constituents about the challenges they have faced in seeking simple permit approvals from the commission. Now, we're taking action to fix the system.

The proposed changes that we put forward align with recent recommendations made by the Auditor General and would truly modernize the outdated program. The aim of these changes is to streamline the permit and approval processes to reduce burden, find efficiencies to better serve client needs and increase compliance tools while enhancing, maintaining and prioritizing protection policies. The proposed changes would include exempting additional low-risk activities from requiring a development permit if rules are followed, such as building a small deck or shed, or an accessibility ramp for an existing structure, and ecological restoration projects for conservation organizations.

The changes also include broadening the range of Niagara Escarpment Commission compliance tools to improve its ability to inspect and/or address non-compliant development activities. Many existing permit requirements under the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act are duplicated by municipal permit requirements. Several of these proposed changes would provide clarity and fix known issues that municipalities have previously raised. In addition, the commission receives hundreds of permit applications each year that can take several months to complete from submission to decision date. By streamlining the processes and ultimately improving service delivery, the commission can focus on more complex applications and protection measures for the area. This is, of course, consistent with our principle of maintaining and enhancing environmental protections while reducing administrative burden.

Next, I'd like to share some proposals from the Ministry of Mines on modernizing the critical minerals sector. In Ontario, Speaker, mining claim holders must actively explore the lands for minerals to keep their mining claims in good standing and provide a report summarizing the exploration work, called assessment work, or make payments in place of this work. Assessment work provides value to the province by adding to Ontario's geoscience knowledge database and ensuring mining lands are actively being used for mineral exploration, including to explore for critical minerals. We are consulting on the proposed changes to modernize the assessment regime, including expanding ways businesses can obtain assessment work credit, reviewing ministry requirements and making technological improvements to the mining lands administration system.

We're also seeking to modernize the exploration permitting process and are consulting on ways to streamline the process, making it easier to obtain mining exploration permits. The changes ensure Ontario remains competitive and attractive for investments and supports strong supply chains through mineral exploration.

On the topic of mining, Speaker, we also previously amended the Mining Act to make it easier for mining companies to recover minerals from tailings and waste at closed or abandoned mine sites. Now we're moving forward with consultations on the proposed regulations to reduce burden and support previous amendments that make it easier for mining companies to recover critical minerals from mine tailings and waste at closed mine sites. Enabling companies to recover and reprocess minerals from mine waste will not only help minimize the impact of mineral development on health, safety and the environment, they would also encourage these projects to move forward by removing existing costs and time barriers, including the current requirements for submitting closure plans, land tenure and financial assurance to the government.

1450

When it comes to reducing costs for businesses, Speaker, I'd like to share an initiative coming from the Ministry of Education. We're working to reduce the process burden for school boards by adopting new digital practices and technologies that will deliver simpler, faster and better services to school boards across our province. These changes improve the process for accessing education applications, starting with Ontario Education Number and Ontario School Information System applications by implementing a few changes. First, a single sign-in for Ontario School Information System access will provide an alternative to paper-based processes, and an expansion of the API to facilitate system-to-system integration will significantly reduce the number of manual steps needed to facilitate submission into the Ontario School Information System. Not only will the changes reduce administrative burden on schools and school board staff and allow staff to focus on other tasks and priorities, they will also result in significant time and cost savings for school boards.

When it comes to making it easier to work with government, Speaker, I would like to share a proposal coming from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. We're proposing to streamline and improve processes related to the ministry's core research funding programs: the Ontario Research Fund—Research Excellence program, the Ontario Research Fund—Research Infrastructure program and the Early Researcher Awards program.

The ministry manages several research funding programs that attract the world's best researchers to the province and lead to the development of innovations that drive our province's economy. The ministry issues calls for proposals, coordinates a peer review process to help assess applications and ultimately establishes multi-year funding agreements with colleges, universities, hospitals and research institutions that manage approved research projects. To help reduce red tape, the ministry is working to streamline and improve end-to-end program processes related to its core research funding programs. This will make it easier for organizations to apply for research funding and manage approved projects that will provide social and economic benefits for Ontarians.

Another example of one of the many ways we're making it easier to work with government is through the

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's board governance requirements update. If you recall from our spring package, Speaker, the ministry proposed amendments to improve how tourism and culture agencies operated internally and, consequently, how they deliver services and work with businesses in our province. I'm proud to report that the changes, which have now come into effect, have resulted in administrative efficiencies while improving board recruitment, retention and management, and have allowed Ontario's tourism and culture agencies, which represent some of the province's most iconic tourist and cultural institutions, to run more efficiently and effectively. Changes like those not only make it only easier to work with government but they also play an important role in the government's plan to build a stronger Ontario. To develop this important red tape reduction package, we have been working collaboratively across government with our ministry partners in consulting with a range of stakeholders and people across the province to build an unparalleled inventory of ideas. I want to take a moment to recognize some of those pieces coming out of this package that directly address ideas and requests like these from stakeholders and people across our province.

We have a proposal coming from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to amend the Agriculture and Horticulture Organizations Act. The proposal will make it easier for agricultural and horticultural societies to operate, reduce confusion between the Agriculture and Horticulture Organizations Act and the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, as well as provide less onerous financial reporting options. This came as a direct ask from the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies and Ontario Horticultural Association, and we were happy to deliver.

Next, we have an item coming from our colleagues at the Ministry of Transportation, who are developing a new and more efficient land development review module as part of the online Highway Corridor Management System. We've heard from developers, municipalities and businesses who suggested the need for an online land development review process as part of the initial consultation for the system.

They've asked, and we've delivered. The new module will allow municipalities and developers to submit land development applications, track the status of submissions and access comments, all from a convenient online public portal. Currently, one must use several different channels to complete this type of work, from arranging separate pre-consultation meetings and emailing submissions, comments to multiple people, groups, to requesting updates by email, telephone and so on. It's onerous, and it's not a good use of anyone's time. By being able to navigate the land development application process through a central location, it reduces the number of interactions or touch-points, improves the overall efficiency of the land development application process and helps get shovels in the ground quicker for priority projects. It's a win-win for Ontario.

Next, we have a proposal from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to extend the term limits of the chairs of

college and university boards of governors. Right now, board members have legislated six-year term limits. Sometimes, colleges and universities want to extend the term of their board chairs to support leadership, but unfortunately, they have not been able to do so because of these limits. These changes will provide colleges and universities with more flexibility to maintain leadership and provide for an orderly board chair transition. And as I said, this is a request that came directly from the sector.

Elaine Pitcher, acting chair of the board of governors at Algoma University, has shared the following on the proposed changes:

"The current Algoma University Act limits our board members' terms to six years. This simply is not a best practice if we are truly committed to developing and properly preparing persons who will assume the position of chair.

"With a six-year term limit it means that chairs must be identified, and be agreeable to start on the journey to becoming the chair within the first two years of their service on the board, as they would serve as the vice-chair starting in their third year, at the latest.

"For many persons who might be interested, they find that this is not sufficient time to learn and properly prepare for such a role. This often results in good people being reluctant, or refusing to assume such an accelerated progression.

1500

"Universities are complex and very important organizations and boards should not simply be selecting persons who are 'willing' to serve as chair but rather we should always be selecting the best person for the position, and we should be providing them with experience and exposure to the various board committees before assuming the top position."

Matthew Mackenzie, from the Ontario Tech University, had similar thoughts at a committee:

"Ontario Tech University welcomes the proposed changes to our university's founding act. The potential for a board chair's term to be extended by two years to a maximum of eight will support enhanced governance at the university. The majority of our governors who do serve on our board come from outside of higher education and often have little experience with our sector. We want that; we draw them in for the external expertise that they bring, but it also comes with a relatively high learning curve for them when they get here.

"Those who have served as our board chair have come into this environment and taken the time required to understand it and distinguish themselves by being appointed as a committee chair or vice-chair over the course of several years. Being a committee chair or vice-chair is itself another learning curve, one that the individual excels at enough that their peers would ultimately elect them to become the board chair, and then once they are the board chair, they're required to expand their skill set yet again, bringing their committee skills to bear on the entire boardroom.

"A skilled chair brings out the best in the board, just as they previously brought out the best in their committee,

and all too often we find that they really are in their prime as the board chair when their second three-year term ends and, unfortunately, they need to leave our board. If we're lucky, we may get two years with a chair, but very often we only get one year with a chair."

I think it's clear that our post-secondary institutions will benefit from the stability and predictability associated with the proposed changes.

We're also proposing to modernize and streamline the regulations and processes for Ontario's credit unions. These changes will help them stay competitive in the current climate and ensure they can continue to offer first-rate services to their communities. This is a request that came from the Canadian Credit Union Association and Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario. These proposed changes clarify rules and reduce administrative burden on the sector and credit union members. In fact, the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario estimates that for larger, more complex credit unions, removing the requirement for offering statements to contain two financial statements would shorten offering statements by 100 to 200 pages, encouraging efficiencies and savings in the sector.

We are also proposing amendments to the Corporations Act that would make it easier for social clubs to continue their operations under the Business Corporations Act, the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010, or the Co-operative Corporations Act prior to the deadline of October 19, 2026. This will ultimately reduce the risk of dissolution so they can continue to operate and serve their members and communities, reducing burden for share capital social clubs.

Joseph Latham, from the Scarboro Golf and Country Club, shared with the Standing Committee on Justice Policy why these changes are so important, stating, "Share capital clubs represent thousands of members and employees across Ontario. We are, first and foremost, a diverse group of community hubs. Our members put significant work into these organizations, building and supporting the organizations and working hard to support our broader communities. Members enjoy facilities year-round with their families and friends, including for water-sports, golf, tennis, badminton, fitness centres, events, dining and more, depending on the nature of the club...."

"We are pleased to see the proposed amendments in Bill 139 that will make it easier for share capital social clubs to pass a resolution to continue from the Corporations Act under one of the three specified acts. If passed, the proposed amendments will reduce the risk of dissolution of these important community hubs, allowing the continued smooth operation of our organizations and allowing us to serve our members and communities for years to come."

Speaker, that's how we deliver less red tape and more common sense.

With the time I have left, I just want to look back to some of the many red tape reduction accomplishments of our government over the last five years. The first red tape reduction package was in the fall of 2018, when the

Legislature passed the Making Ontario Open for Business Act, which removed erroneous regulatory burden introduced by the previous Liberal government and, of course, supported by the NDP. This is the bill that addressed the backlog in Ontario skilled trades by replacing Ontario's outdated model with a one-to-one person-to-apprentice ratio for every trade for which ratios apply, better aligning Ontario with other provinces and territories.

In April 2019, the Legislature passed the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, with 31 actions to cut red tape in 12 sectors, along with regulatory changes. These actions cut business costs, harmonized regulatory requirements with other jurisdictions, ended duplication and reduced barriers to investment.

In December 2019, the Legislature passed the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, which was part of the broader package of more than 80 actions to cut red tape and modernize regulations to make life easier for people and businesses. This included supports to various business sectors, including agriculture, trucking, construction, forestry and mining. It streamlined and consolidated rules and requirements for quarries, farming and waste management. And it created a one-stop shop for trucking safety and emissions inspections and hydroelectric dam approvals.

And then, of course, just a few months after we introduced the third red tape package in late 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Ontario has long been the manufacturing engine of our country, and the pandemic made it clear that we are a supply chain economy. We had to keep operating costs for Ontario businesses as low as possible while maintaining and strengthening those standards that are essential to keeping people healthy and protecting the environment. We knew the biggest single way we can support Ontario businesses is to make regulations easier, faster and less costly to comply with, so we built on our work to modernize regulations so businesses could continue to prosper.

In November 2020, the Legislature passed the Main Street Recovery Act to support the very businesses that fuel our economy and bring life into our communities. One important measure in the act was enabling 24/7 truck deliveries for retailers, restaurants and distribution centres permanent, building on a temporary change made to keep store shelves full through the first wave of the pandemic when many retailers were experiencing low supplies. Other examples from this act, Speaker, included increasing the diversity of products sold at the Ontario Food Terminal and allowing the terminal to promote local foods.

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In December 2020, the Legislature passed the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act to strengthen Ontario's economic recovery, support businesses on the ground and help government deliver clear and effective rules that promote public health and safeguard the environment without sacrificing innovation, growth and opportunity. This package required gas and electric utilities to adopt Green Button technologies so that utility consumers could better understand energy consumption and reduce costs;

allowed single traffic studies for an entire specified highway corridor or area to reduce duplication and enable developers to get shovels in the ground faster; made it easier for property developers to get the environmental information they need by moving from a manual paper-based process to a much faster digital delivery platform; and cut red tape for intercommunity bus carriers to improve transportation options in rural and northern Ontario, making it easier for workers and families to access more transportation options.

In June 2021, the Legislature passed the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act to help businesses and government deliver clear, modern and effective rules that promoted public health, safeguarded the environment and created jobs. This comprehensive package included measures to bring more Ontario services online, such as sticker renewal for commercial vehicle licence plates; support the not-for-profit sector and other corporations by allowing them to continue to hold virtual meetings; and help support innovative pilot programs for autonomous, electrified and connected vehicles.

In December 2021, the Legislature passed the Supporting People and Businesses Act, which laid the groundwork for licensed restaurants and bars to extend their outdoor patio spaces last year when they needed it most; made it easier for people to become volunteers by providing free police checks; and enabled additional financial supports and a simplified application process for the Second Career program, a program that helps those looking for employment training for occupations in high demand.

Speaker, the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act, introduced in February 2022, was our eighth red tape reduction bill. This package included financial relief for millions of Ontario vehicle owners, removing the requirement for and providing refunds for licence plate renewal fees. It gave drivers a break by removing unfair tolls from Highways 412 and 418. We began the work of establishing a single window for business service, including service standards so businesses would know how long it would take to get the information they need from government. We also introduced the Building Ontario Businesses initiative, which will help strengthen the supply chain and provide Ontario businesses with greater access to public procurement opportunities through Supply Ontario. And we took steps to unlock the value and optimize the use of government real estate to attract investment, identify social benefit opportunities and support communities across our great province.

In fall 2022, we introduced the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, which launched the Grow Ontario Strategy to strengthen Ontario's food supply chain from farm to fork. It made it easier to build electricity transmission lines to serve new industrial development. It helped municipalities optimize the timing of reduced load periods on their roads, making it easier to get goods to market. And it began to remove the barriers to the adoption of carbon capture and storage technology in the province of Ontario.

Last spring, we brought forward the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, which amended the Building

Broadband Faster Act to help speed up the delivery of high-speed Internet access to every community by the end of 2025; strengthened occupational health and safety in the mining sector by changing regulations to reflect modern technologies and better protect workers; and took steps to implement the Hague convention on international recovery of child support, reducing frustration for families involved in the province's child and spousal support orders system by enabling enforcement of support orders in more than 55 countries. We helped improve safety on Ontario roads by updating the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit drivers from overtaking a working snowplow unless a full lane is available.

And now we're going further with the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act. We have made tremendous progress so far and are well on our way to saving businesses, not-for-profit organizations and the broader public sector nearly \$1 billion in annual regulatory compliance costs.

But let me be clear: When we reach that goal, we will never stop working to improve government services and reduce unnecessary burdens on people and businesses. In fact, we're already working on what comes next. As part of our efforts to continue to find ways to streamline processes and modernize outdated practices across multiple areas of government, we will soon be launching a mandatory regulatory review which we are calling the 10-year review. The review is a cross-government initiative, led by the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, with the intent to ensure Ontario's regulations remain modern and relevant, which in turn will make us more agile and competitive in today's changing global economy. Beginning in January of next year, ministries across government will be required to complete an annual review of any of their regulations that have been filed for 10 years or more.

As you can imagine, Speaker, a lot can happen in the span of a decade. What tends to happen is that ministries will create laws or regulations for a certain purpose or in response to an issue, but then a new issue comes along and, before you know it, everyone has forgotten about the original issue. Still, as new issues come and new issues go, these new laws and regulations continue to get layered on top of those that already exist. I know ministries don't set out with the intention of making these laws and regulations expensive or difficult to comply with, but over time, left unchecked, that's exactly what happens. Simply put, many of these rules and regulations remain on the books long after their original purpose has passed.

That's why, as a government, we need to step back and see if what the ministry created is still relevant and necessary, adapt to the evolving needs, technological advancements and other changing circumstances. This is exactly the purpose of our 10-year mandatory regulatory review. Regularly assessing the province's regulations is crucial to ensuring that they remain relevant in the current landscape, that the businesses and regulated entities here in Ontario can prosper in a competitive and innovative marketplace, and that individuals are provided with the best possible access to government services.

Through the review, we will continue to assess regulations through the lens of seven regulatory modernization principles enshrined in the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act. This is our guiding legislation that was established to increase transparency and contain the cost of doing business with government. These seven principles are:

- use recognized national or international standards whenever possible, instead of Ontario-specific rules;

- apply a small-business lens, recognizing that small businesses have fewer resources dedicated to compliance than the larger businesses;

- go digital by delivering simple and straightforward digital services and products wherever possible;

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- reward good actors by using risk-based inspections where possible, focusing on practices that pose the most risk or on organizations that haven't proven their ability to comply with the rules;

- create a “tell us once” culture where people and businesses don't have to tell us the same information repeatedly;

- focus on the user by writing rules and regulations in plain language and providing a single point of contact for any questions or concerns; and

- use outcomes-based regulations that state the outcome we want achieved, instead of prescriptive regulations that outline how to achieve the outcome.

Speaker, guided by these principles, we're going to continue working to cut red tape across government. We're going to continue to reduce frustration, expenses and needless delays and complications for everyone, from individuals to businesses, non-profit organizations and the broader public sector. We're going to remove those regulatory burdens that are barriers to our productivity, innovation, economic competitiveness and development. And we're going to get this important work done by maintaining and strengthening those important rules and regulations that are necessary to keep people safe and happy and protect the environment.

With that, Madam Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity, and I look forward to answering any questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for questions.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Bill 139, Less Red Tape, More Common Sense: You know the problem I have with the bill right off the hop? The last time I heard about common sense was when Mike Harris was the Premier. He ran under common sense and closed 26 hospitals and laid off 6,000 nurses.

With a government that has been caught pushing development on environmentally significant lands to benefit their friends and donors, do you believe it's a good idea to strip away guidelines and regulations for the commission that is tasked with protecting the Niagara Escarpment, an environmental jewel in our community and right across the province of Ontario?

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank the member opposite for that question. Madam Speaker, I know the opposition like to live in the past. I know they are opposed to a lot of the changes that we're bringing forward constantly to make the lives of everyday Ontarians easier.

The changes proposed for the Niagara Escarpment Commission—obviously, most of my great riding of Milton is covered by the Niagara Escarpment Commission—are for simple permits where somebody needs to build, let's say, a small shed behind their structure or they need to create an accessibility ramp. These are no-brainer changes. These are also changes coming out of the Auditor General's report.

I would strongly encourage my colleagues, my friends on the opposite benches to support these common-sense ideas. These are necessary. These help Ontarians not only reduce costs but also save time and frustration.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the minister for his remarks. Certainly, when this came out for second reading, I was pretty happy to see a number of the changes, including the amendments to the Professional Engineers Act, but more importantly for my community, the excess soil is a component—that comes via the Ministry of the Environment.

But, really, I look at this and was hoping to get your take, being the minister: How important is it for the well functioning of government and services that are delivered by the province to get these done efficiently in a way that families can actually achieve their goals and their dreams? I'm hoping you can expand on how these measures will truly make a difference for ordinary Ontarians.

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank my colleague for that important question. As I mentioned in my remarks, when we first formed government in 2018, we recognized that Ontario was a province that was the most heavily regulated province in the country, on average costing a business over \$33,000 a year just in compliance costs.

Of course, we've done all of this important work, since 2018, by working with Ontarians, working with Ontario businesses and stakeholders, to learn first-hand exactly what it is that's holding them back, what it is that's causing them grief, what it is that's costing them money that they could be investing in their businesses and helping the Ontario economy. These are changes that are now helping save Ontario businesses nearly \$950 million in annual compliance costs.

Obviously, we recognize that there's a lot more work that needs to be done. That's why we have a stand-alone fully dedicated ministry, dedicated to working with individuals and businesses across our province to look at finding ways how we can improve, how we can help them succeed. We will continue to do the hard work each and every day.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Bhutika Karpoche: This bill, the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act is, I think, the government's

fourth red tape reduction bill. Is that correct? Fourth? Anyway, it doesn't matter.

The point I'm trying to make is that there is one file where red tape reduction is desperately needed, but the government refuses to touch it, and that is the ODSP program. There's so much red tape out there in the ODSP program, not only in terms of being eligible and actually applying for it, but also in determination of income based on relationship status. Right now, the ODSP program defines "common-law" as three months. Even the Ontario government's official definition of "common-law" is one year.

So I ask the minister: What are you doing to address red tape in ODSP?

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank the member opposite for that important question. First and foremost, I want to let her know that this is actually the 11th red tape reduction package that we have introduced in this Legislature since 2018. It's through these initiatives, through various different packages that we bring through each and every year—our spring package, our fall package—that we're able to deliver the kind of success that we have, as I mentioned, saving in annual compliance costs for businesses nearly \$950 million; since 2018, saving Ontario businesses altogether nearly \$3 billion.

Of course, anytime the members opposite want to talk about red tape, it's when we're debating the piece of legislation. I have always encouraged them. The important thing to note in all of this is that I have not received a single idea from the opposition when it comes to reducing red tape for Ontarians. Of course, you might hear something at a committee later when the bill is being studied. But I would encourage that if you really care about reducing red tape, why not—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Mr. Deepak Anand: What common sense it is: When you increase the red tape, you increase the costs. When you increase the costs, you make the business uncompetitive. When you reduce the costs, you make them competitive. So I want to thank the minister for doing an incredible job.

Minister, how can we make sure, if we have ideas—how can we come and bring it to you? What is the process for that red tape reduction that your government is following? I know this process, but I want to make sure that the opposition can hear it so that they can at least bring in an idea and help the people of Ontario.

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank my colleague from Mississauga–Malton for that important question. There are obviously many, many ways. There are many, many ways you could pitch an idea, and one that I'd like to highlight, of course, is to encourage every Ontarian to go to our online portal, ontario.ca/redtape. Anywhere, 24/7, you have an opportunity to go online, in the comfort of your home or wherever you are, and submit an idea that you feel is holding you back.

Obviously, I can tell you, on this side of the House, a lot of our colleagues hold regular round tables and are talking to businesses and individuals in their local ridings.

They hear this feedback, of course. They bring it to our attention. We then, in turn, work with our ministry partners to look at ways we can find efficiencies: how we can make lives easier and more efficient and continue to reduce burden on all Ontarians.

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We recognize there's a lot that needs to be done. We will continue to work hard every day.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm curious to know whether this government would consider forcing Ontarians to make hundreds of unnecessary phone calls because they can't find a family doctor—Health Care Connect is basically useless at helping people find primary care.

We have 65,000 Londoners without access to a family physician. Their only options are to call around to every doctor in the city to see if they're accepting new patients, or get the notice from Health Care Connect that there is not help available. Is that the kind of red tape that this government is willing to try to reduce?

Hon. Parm Gill: I thank my colleague on the other side for that question. I'm sure she would be pleased to know, if she has had the opportunity to look at the bill, that in this bill alone, we've introduced initiatives to help reduce the burden on physicians and streamline some of the forms. They're spending upwards of nearly 20 hours a week trying to fill up those forms—to streamline, working with the Ontario Medical Association and with the doctors to eliminate that.

What does all of that mean? That means a savings of over 95,000 hours per year. On average, we'll save each doctor about—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for further debate.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my honour to rise today to add my voice and the voice of the great people of London North Centre to the debate on Bill 139, the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act.

As the minister has mentioned, this is the 11th red tape reduction bill. As we start to look at the tenure of this government and the amount of time that they have spent in power—in government, Speaker; in a majority government—they have not necessarily paid the greatest attention towards much of the barriers and the arbitrary limitations that people in Ontario face, so much so that I would posit that, indeed, this government has reinforced "blue tape."

Now, as I start off my remarks, I do want to send my sincere thoughts and my thanks to the jury: Just today, in my home community of London, the jury in the trial of Nathaniel Veltman reached a verdict. You see, back on June 6, 2021, three generations of the Afzaal family were killed in what was a terrorist act, an act fuelled by hatred, an act fuelled by Islamophobia, an act committed by a weak, hateful person. What it did was it took three generations of one family, who were simply out for a walk on a beautiful day. It caused such hurt and such fear in our community of London that people were starting to feel afraid of wearing religious clothing—people afraid to

leave their homes; people afraid to go for a walk in their own neighbourhoods and communities.

I'm thankful today that the jury has returned a verdict of four counts of first-degree murder for the loss of Salman, Madiha, Talat and Yumnah. They've also returned a count of attempted murder. Now, with your permission, Speaker, I would like to leave the youngest member's name off the official record, as to respect the family.

Across our entire country and across North America, people looked at what happened here, and it should give us pause. We must consider the impacts of careless words, of division, of hatred, of pitting people against one another. Because instead of looking for what divides us, we should be looking for the things that we share in common, the things that make us all human beings. Instead, that person, that creature who took those lives, looked only for the things that were different.

Now, it's horrifying when you consider the testimony and you consider how this young person was inspired by such loathsome hate, and the websites that this person looked at and how they allowed themselves to devolve into such a subhuman level. It is an utter disgrace to our common humanity that there was somebody who chose to take these bright lives, these beautiful people away from our community, and to leave one person orphaned.

I want to also say that, for the entire Muslim community and all the communities across Ontario, London, and Canada, we as a Legislature and here on the side of the Ontario NDP, the official opposition, are committed to making Islamophobia a thing of the past. We must all, across the aisle, join hands and seek to eradicate those forms of hate that dehumanize, that segregate, that divide us from one another, because those are the kinds of things that we cannot accept within our society.

Interjections.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you.

We have seen, in recent times, a rise in Islamophobia, in anti-Palestinian racism, in anti-Semitism. We see it everywhere, where people are put into camps and are forgetting what unites us, what common things we have. When we are cut, do we not bleed the same? When we smile, do we not feel that same uplifting joy?

And, Speaker, I'm thankful that justice has been served, but justice will never replace those lives. Justice will never give them back to the community. We will never see those people grow. We will never know what contributions they could have made to society, all of the impacts, because a human life is like a pebble dropped in a pond, and it causes ripples. If that person chooses to put love into this world and to put positivity in this world and to listen to one another and to truly listen—not just listen with ears, but listen with their heart—then that can change the world.

When we stop looking at things from our perspective—and I know it's impossible. I know we can never technically see the world from somebody else's eyes. We can never really, truly walk in somebody else's shoes, but that's not the point. The point is that we should try. The point is that we should put ourselves aside, put our

thoughts aside, and try to think like somebody else. And while it may be next to impossible, the mere act of doing so makes us more human.

I think back to my days as an educator, as a teacher librarian, and part of the curriculum in grade 2 is world cultures, traditions and celebrations. What I would do as an educator would be that I would send a letter to every single person, every single family in the community and say, "If Canada is a new home for you or if Canada is a new home for your parents, grandparents or great-grandparents, we would love to have you"—we would set up displays where people would bring their cultural artifacts. They would bring mementos from home, possibly food, if they so wished. What would happen would be that the children would come and visit each of these as a station. Now, it wouldn't be—I sometimes wonder and worry about an educator standing up in front of a class and then speaking to a broad array of students and some of the students not paying attention. However, when you make the students responsible for their learning—they would go around and talk to these folks at different tables. They had a little passport. They would get it stamped and they would go and visit these people.

It was my intention that, in this way, we would teach what it means to truly be anti-racist, because it's teaching with love; it's teaching acceptance. It's giving them that experience.

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I think you can all imagine ancient maps—we all know what they appear like—and those pictures of gigantic monsters that you would see in the ocean. Do you know what those monsters actually represent? They represent areas that have been uncharted: places that have not been explored; places that might be deemed scary. I suspect that sometimes we are the same, as human beings. When we don't have the opportunity to meet someone, when we don't have the opportunity to learn from them, when we don't have the opportunity to accept them, they're at best different, at worst scary.

So, in this manner, if a child from this experience ever met with some terrible individual who might say to them a horrible statement such as, "All people from such and such place are"—then that child could say, "No, I met Mr. So-and-so, I met Ms. So-and-so, and they were wonderful. They were great." And that's the kind of thing that we need to see happen here in our province: more opportunities for understanding. More abilities for us to come together and learn from each other, learn what we share in common and learn what is different.

Now, as I take a look towards Bill 139, I think as well about the current situation in our province. We are seeing a cost-of-living crisis the likes of which has not been seen in decades. We see people who are living paycheque to paycheque. We see people who are living hand to mouth. We see people who are working in jobs, earning far less than they deserve, and worried that one injury or one illness will end up causing them an upheaval of their entire life. We have people who are concerned about losing their housing and living in cars.

Now this government, in their 11th red tape reduction bill, has not addressed all the forms of red tape that exist and that this government has been made aware of throughout the process for all of the other many red tape reduction bills that they have introduced in this chamber. I suspect, and I wonder, whether this red tape reduction bill, Bill 139, has another different purpose. I wonder whether this bill exists as a pleasant distraction, Speaker, as something to change the channel.

You see, in recent history, we have seen this government mired in scandal, from the greenbelt carve-up, where prime agricultural land was divvied up to speculator insider friends, turning millionaires into billionaires to the tune of \$8.3 billion—and by the way, Speaker, that was also 2016 numbers; I'm sure that \$8.3 billion number would be far higher in 2022-23 numbers. We've seen forced MZO's—that have been forced and then somehow been brought back. We even saw—what was it for lawyers? It was the King's Counsel, was it not? The KC designation that nobody seemed to ask for, nobody seemed to want, but nonetheless was bestowed upon a number of different government members. It's very curious that this patronage was brought back.

But at this current moment, we see a government that must be always checking over its shoulder, must be always listening behind itself, wondering if it's going to hear the sirens coming, wondering when the door is going to be knocking, wondering when the RCMP is going to say, "Come out with your hands up." I often wonder, as I enter this place daily, when sometimes I'm walking by the corner office—by the Premier's office—on what day I'm going to be wandering by and see crime scene caution tape that's—you know, "You're no longer allowed to enter. This is the scene of a crime under active investigation. Please stay back." I suspect it's just a matter of time. Maybe we'll see files and shredding and perhaps even smoke coming from the windows. We shall see, we shall see. We certainly see smoke coming from some of the government members' ears on days when they're upset about hearing those four magical letters: RCMP.

Last time we discussed Bill 139, the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, we discussed that, in my riding, I had the opportunity to sit on a Diabetes Canada round table with the member for London West. It was truly eye-opening but also shocking how many gaps and red tape exist for people who are either born with or diagnosed with diabetes, both type 1 and type 2. It was truly disturbing. We heard from nurse practitioners. We heard from diabetes educators. We heard from an endocrinologist. We heard from a PhD student. We heard so many voices on this topic. Quite strangely, one of the people who was in attendance was actually a relative of Sir Frederic Banting. Now, I think we are all aware that Sir Frederick Banting, who helped discover insulin, sold the patent for insulin for—how much was it?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Free? One dollar?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: He sold the patent for \$1, because after he understood the disease and how awful and how difficult it is, how could he possibly morally and

ethically justify making money off of something that people required in order to live? It really reinforces our Canadian public health care; it reinforces our Canadian values that people should be able to get care when and where they need it, regardless of their ability to pay. That is why he is frequently on the lists of the greatest Canadians, Sir Frederick Banting. It is no wonder.

We had the opportunity to visit this round table at the historic site of Banting House. It's a national historic site. What made me think of this in its relation to Bill 139 was the tremendous burden of paperwork that physicians and especially the endocrinologist Dr. Tamara Spaic faces. Dr. Spaic indicated that she has to fill or deal with 3,000 individual forms every single year. The reason for that is that the person with diabetes has to send that form in every single year to still say that, yes indeed, they have diabetes. And it goes through quite a number of different hands before it is properly filled. It has to go to the diabetes care team. It has to go to the endocrinologist. It has to come from the patient. It goes in this long, circuitous route. The amount of time that Dr. Spaic mentioned having to deal with these forms is ridiculous. When Dr. Spaic is done their practice for the day, they're spending daily until 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock, midnight just dealing with these forms that are redundant, duplicative and, quite frankly, something that is an example of red tape, so I am happy that the government has listened.

During pre-budget consultations, I had the opportunity to sit as the Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. We travelled all across the province, and we heard from a number of different family physicians who talked about the burden of paperwork, how much that administration ends up taking away from their ability to properly care for their patients. So I'm pleased. I am pleased that the government has listened to those recommendations.

However, in committee, I did ask the minister about some of the other recommendations that the OMA had brought forward in order to deal with that administrative backlog, one of which was medical scribes. It could also be a powerful way to involve internationally educated physicians in building their proficiency within the field prior to their assessments. Unfortunately, there was really no indication whether that was something that was being considered or not, but also, I do wonder—I know that there is this promise, but I'm always wondering about how we judge whether this promise has been successful. How do we know whether we have achieved our desired result? How can we as a Legislature determine that our intended result has been arrived at? How can we know whether it simply was a dismal failure or whether we've over-achieved? Because, quite frankly, there is no barometer, there is no measure for this promise within Bill 139. So when I see those sorts of promises, it makes me wonder whether they're just simply flimsy window dressing, whether this is a promise that is not intended to truly be kept, and that is quite a concern.

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Now the OMA also made additional asks which this government seems quite content to avoid. The OMA is

also asking for greater access to primary care physicians. That is a huge crisis within this province. We know that there are many avenues in which this government could ensure that people have access to primary care physicians—by funding nurse-practitioner-led clinics, for instance, because on their rosters they can roster up to 800 or 900 individuals. That will make sure that people in northern communities, people in less-well-served communities could have access to that wonderful model of care. They want to see more family health teams, and nurse-practitioner-led clinics really truly do provide that.

I had the opportunity to tour one in my area of London called Health Zone, and it was fantastic how they considered the entire person. There was not only a nurse practitioner, but there was also a social worker, there was a dietitian and there was a physiotherapist.

Too often within our health care system, it's very judgmental. It almost assumes, both on the patient side as well as the practitioner side, that people are going to be taking advantage of the system. And what I mean by that is that oftentimes when an individual will visit a physician, they're only able to bring up one issue. Humans are not that simple. We don't simply go to the doctor when there is just one thing wrong. Quite frankly, our systems are complicated; all of our systems are interwoven, and when you have a health issue, it could manifest in a number of different ways. Or people have complicated lives; they could have more than one thing going wrong at the same time. It's just the law of nature. However, unfortunately, because of the way our health care system is set up, that physician cannot bill for multiple things at the same time. They often have to tell that individual to come and make another appointment and see them again. That is red tape that this province could get rid of through bills like Bill 139. Have they chosen to do so? It doesn't seem that way.

Now, as I look towards our issues with health care, I also wanted to consider the red tape that is within our health care system at large. You see, health care is almost like an organism unto itself. We have different demands, such as home and community care; we have community support services, and we also have long-term care as well as acute care. These systems all work together in order to meet the needs and the health care issues that people within the community face. If one of those systems is weakened—made weak by government underfunding, by inaction, by a lack of staff—then unfortunately it has an impact on the other systems with which it is interwoven.

The OMA, within their asks, had asked for more investments within the home and community care sector, and I couldn't agree more. For too long, we have seen governments that are really more interested in funding acute care and making sure that people can make a profit within long-term care, but they haven't given home and community care the support and the recognition that it deserves.

What we also have to see is that home care has been allowed to be privatized within our province. That is yet another form of bureaucratic red tape which is keeping people from being able to access the services that they

require. The Ontario Health Coalition referred to the Auditor General's 2015 report in which the pay disparity—the red tape—that nurses face between different areas is truly frustrating, because a nurse is a nurse is a nurse. Whether they are practising within a home setting, within a long-term-care setting or within an acute-care setting, they are still fulfilling that role. And yet, unfortunately, within our home care system, they are paid so much less.

I had the opportunity to meet with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario with the member from London West and the member from London-Fanshawe. We heard stories about nurses who would really have their heart and soul within the home and community care system, who wanted to visit people within their home. And unfortunately, the red tape that is created by this province in paying them less made many want to move. Even though their heart and all of their care and all of their interest was within that home and community care setting, they would eventually—because of financial pressures, because of the cost-of-living crisis that we're currently going through—end up going to long-term care because they would earn slightly more. Home and community care is, quite frankly, the lowest paid. Long-term care is more, whereas acute care ends up being sort of the gold standard.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Harris): Point of order.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Pursuant to standing order 25(b), I ask, through you, Speaker, that the member please return to the subject of the matter of this bill. He has been speaking for quite a while about things that are not in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Harris): Thank you. I will remind the member to phrase his comments around the bill before us. I know it is a broad bill and there's a lot of leeway, but let's try and keep it on track.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Absolutely. Thank you, Speaker.

I think it's important when we look at a bill that has red tape—and it is the 11th bill of its kind, of red tape reduction—that we consider the other areas that need to be reduced which are red tape within this province. This bill also does comprise the OMA's second ask, I believe it is, but I was just discussing the OMA's first ask and, as well, ways in which this government should focus its efforts to remove the red tape that exists within our province.

It's curious to see how much privatization has really had an impact on this province and on our health care system, but as I was saying, the fact that there is disparity between home care, long-term care and acute care is something that is utterly wrong for the province. A nurse is a nurse is a nurse.

Now, in this bill—

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Harris): Point of order. The member for Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I've been listening to the member's remarks. I don't believe anything links to privatization in the red tape reduction bill before us. I ask, through you, Speaker, that the member from London North Centre

return to the subject matter of the bill as presented today. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Harris): Thank you. I will remind the member from London North Centre, again, that we are debating Bill 139, An Act to amend various Acts, the red tape bill, and to please keep his comments more centred towards the bill specifically.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: When we take a look at the bill, Bill 139, it does some tinkering with the agricultural act. It's interesting that, at this time, we see this being mentioned when, at the same time, this government was disrespecting rural Ontario and farmers by carving up the greenbelt. I also wanted to take a look at the bill and how it discusses university compositions. So we'll take a look at the bill step by step.

Schedule 1 is agricultural and horticultural organizations. It's minor, technical amendments. Speaker, the crux of or the main focus of my comments is that this bill is largely a set of housekeeping amendments that don't necessarily address all of the issues that are happening within the province right now. Just to reiterate, for the members opposite, so they can appreciate and understand the ways in which my argumentation is following—I'm not sure whether they were here in the beginning part—is that this is not addressing the real needs of folks in Ontario. It is a pleasant distraction.

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Now, schedule 2: It is a technical amendment to the Algoma University Act, and it would allow the chair of the board to sit for a period of up to eight years, to be determined by the board. What is interesting about this minor technical amendment is that this could also be achieved—this in and of itself is, in some ways, reduplicative, because it could be accomplished by the institution's board of governors. The government has taken it upon themselves to do that. I don't think there's anything necessarily wrong with that, but it's sort of a strange irony, Speaker, that we are here talking about reducing barriers or not reinventing the wheel, not duplicating efforts or reduplicating things, and yet, this is something that is actually possible and available for that institution themselves, and yet, this government has taken it upon themselves to do that as well.

Now, schedule 3 is the Charities Accounting Act. It removes the notice requirements to the public guardian and trustee where, in a will, property or a right or interest in a property is given to a person for a religious, educational, charitable or public purpose. We spoke to Brent Furtney, who is formerly with Libro Credit Union, now with the Canadian Credit Union Association, and we heard about the importance of how this amendment would impact folks, and it's something that we absolutely support.

In terms of the schedule 5, the Corporations Act, it has amendments that are going to change the Corporations Act. It also concerns these social clubs, and it's going to reduce the risk of social clubs being dissolved. That's something that we absolutely support. Right now, section 2.1 of the Corporations Act governs the continuance of social companies from the act to the Not-for-Profit Cor-

porations Act, 2010, the Co-operative Corporations Act or the Business Corporations Act. Subsection 2.1(4) currently provides that if a social company has more than one class of shareholders, the special resolution passed by the corporation to authorize a continuance must be approved by each class of shareholders by a separate vote. That subsection is proposed to be repealed, and a complementary amendment is proposed to subsection 2.1(7).

Now, when we were speaking about this—it's an interesting thing, Speaker, because the social club that we met with at committee, they weren't sure why there were actually two classes of shareholders. Sometimes within this great House, we inherit legislation from a bygone time, from a bygone era. There was really no indication why there were these two different classes, but it does make sense that we are levelling the playing field and making sure that people have an equal vote.

As well, we saw schedule 6, which is a technical amendment that will make it easier for credit unions to issue shares, purchase other credit unions, prepare investor offering statements and take deposits from brokers who manage money on behalf of clients. It allows credit unions to accept deposits from a member in trust or for a named beneficiary.

Schedule 7 is the Farm Registration and Farm Organizations Funding Act—again, minor technical amendments, nothing that was too upsetting.

Schedule 8, which is on FSRA, the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario Act, reduces the minimum period which the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario requires for feedback from 90 days to 60 days. Now, we were kind of surprised about this removing of a consultation period or taking time away, because, too often with this government, we see that there is very little concern for consultation. In fact, we've seen so many bills plowing forward without any real concern, any real input from stakeholders who will be directly affected.

One example that pops to mind immediately is the ways in which municipalities have been treated by this government: the removal of development charges, the ways in which that has impacted city and municipal finances most recently. Taking a look at what has happened, we saw so many small, rural municipalities that are struggling with huge tax increases who are deeply concerned. And the government also withholding money, funding that they're sort of dangling in front of municipalities based on the number of shovels in the ground, rather than the—

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to say, pursuant to standing order 25(b)(i)—I ask through you, Speaker, that the member from London North Centre return to the subject matter of the bill. The member's remarks right now are not germane to the item currently being debated in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Harris): Thank you very much to the member.

I do believe that the member from London North Centre is well within his rights in this line to continue, but I will

remind him again to make sure that he is keeping it on the bill.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you. Absolutely. Sometimes in this House, it's a matter of weaving a tapestry, telling a story by bringing disparate elements together to inform the whole.

Unfortunately, we've seen that the government is really placing red tape on municipalities. They have this money; they have the opportunity to really create that housing, and instead of delivering that funding based on the number of permits that are issued by the municipality, they're instead saying it has to be shovels in the ground, when municipalities and municipal governments aren't responsible for getting those shovels in the ground. That is yet another example of red tape.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Point of order.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would love this government to look at that in their 12th red tape—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): Point of order, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I appreciate that there is a matter concerning a previous bill, but the debate, pursuant to standing order 25(b)(i), really should be referring to this bill that we're discussing today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Harris): I know that the member is going to make sure that he is tying it to this bill, and I'm sure that we can give him a few more minutes to do that. I'm hopeful that we're not going to have multiple points of order on this and that the member will be able to keep it on track.

If I'm the one who's asking for it, if you can believe it, I'm hopeful that we can all get to that point.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you, Speaker. I'm glad that you're enjoying the tapestry I am weaving here for you. It's unfortunate that one's train of thought is being broken so often with so many interruptions, so I do appreciate your words.

To show a very clear and present example of what is red tape is that we need to make sure that we are supporting municipalities and not putting an arbitrary barrier in front of them. That is truly the example of bureaucratic impediment, something that is keeping them from being able to achieve the good work that they need to do.

Before I move on, I just wanted to show and speak to exactly what happened and exactly the numbers that we have. London, for instance, just on this red tape that they are facing that is current with this government: The city has granted permissions for 3,061 housing units. It's 88% of the province's target. They're really close to the province's target, but they are not responsible for getting those shovels in the ground. What I want to say to this government: This is the 11th red tape reduction bill; this is yet another example of things that should be eliminated. The city is permitting, they are doing their very best to make sure they are expediting that process as much as possible, but they're not ultimately responsible. That is red tape that is in their way. They shouldn't be denied funding based upon something that is outside of their control. Thank you for your indulgence, Speaker.

As we look toward schedule 9 within this bill, the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act, we've also seen many movements from this government to take a look at different jurisdictions. We've seen motions that would have this Legislature creating missives or letters to the federal government, advocating for different things. What I would also like to see this government putting forward would be a letter to the federal government asking for relief on those CEBA loans that so many people were dependent upon through COVID-19. That would be something that I think this government should take in hand. Small businesses are 80% of our economy. They are the backbone of our neighbourhoods, our communities, and that's something we should look at.

In schedule 10, the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, which the minister did discuss at length, I also think—I was speaking with folks who represent Enterprise Rent-A-Car in my riding. Something that they are facing, and a very real and present danger that I think is in all of our communities, is the massive increase in catalytic converter theft that we've seen within the province. When folks are running a dealership or running a car lot, they watch the cameras and they see these guys get in. They have it down to a science. They have gotten super fast. I'd also like to see protections for folks like that.

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This government could make sure that different initiatives are taken: that the VIN number be placed on catalytic converters, that there is a registry, but also making sure that scrap dealers are abiding by the law and not taking in vast amounts of these devices, because, as we know, the metals and the materials within them are quite lucrative.

Next we can go on to schedule 11, which is the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act. Clause 23(c) provides for exemptions of classes of persons, and not just classes of developments, from requiring a development permit. The statute itself already grants the minister broad authority to prescribe exemptions for classes of development. It raises the question: Is this an incremental change? Is it going to signal an attempt to exempt more activities from requiring a development permit in the Niagara Escarpment region? This is part of the greenbelt, after all. You have to understand that on this side of the House, when we see this government doing anything about the greenbelt, we tend to get our backs up. We get a little nervous. We have to take a look at this with a very keen eye now.

Next, we move on to schedule 12, which is the Nipissing University Act. Again, it allows the chair—kind of like Algoma University—to serve under certain circumstances for eight years instead of six. It's again, for example, Speaker—which is curious—a reduplicative measure. It is something that could be achieved by the board of governors, and it's interesting to me that the government has decided to take this on. There's nothing necessarily wrong with it; however, it's just kind of a surprise.

Again, when I come back to my “pleasant distraction” comments about this bill itself, there's nothing odious

about it. There is no poison pill. It's not as though we've gone through this pie and found any arsenic, which is surprising, because oftentimes with these gigantic omnibus bills, there's always something that we simply can't stand for, that we have to stop. Then this government is given the latitude to say, "See? Algoma University—you voted against this," and that we've done all these terrible things; meanwhile, it was always an active intention of the government to make sure that we couldn't vote for it so then they could claim that we didn't support one portion of a vast amount of what's in these bills.

Schedule 13 is in regard to the Ontario College of Art and Design. Would you look at that? It is the same as schedule 2 and schedule 12. It allows the chair, under certain circumstances, to serve for eight years instead of six. It's a reduplicative measure. It's not the hill upon which the official opposition is willing to die. It's not something we oppose. It's just curious to me, but my curiosity doesn't necessarily stand in the way of us supporting a piece of legislation within this chamber. That's probably a thankful thing, Speaker—or something the government should be thankful for; pardon me.

Now, there are also in schedule 14 some changes to the Ontario Heritage Act. It amends the Ontario Heritage Act to allow alterations of heritage attributes related to religious practices in a building used for religious purposes—now, there is a caveat—if the alterations are required for religious practices and all other prescribed conditions are met. This does seem reasonable, because I think we have to make sure that we are looking after our heritage properties. There's so much character and so much craftsmanship. The ways in which old buildings are created really show that level of artistry. They show that somebody devoted their life to a craft. They devoted their life to an art form in the building. Unfortunately, we sometimes see modern buildings that really lack that level of detail, that level of care. We look all around this chamber, and we see the amount of love, inspiration, time and detail that have gone into it. To recreate this sort of thing—I shudder to think of the cost.

Next is changes to the Professional Engineers Act. It repeals section 7(1), paragraph 10. It eliminates the ability of the PEO council to prescribe forms of applications for licences, certificates of authorization, temporary licences, provisional licences and limited licences, and requiring their use. We did hear at committee really disturbing stories and really disturbing allegations that the individual who presented was concerned that the PEO had not addressed. There are related amendments to the restriction: the issuance of the temporary licences and so on is now to the registrar.

The other amendments appear to be technical by nature in order to modernize the act. It changes the reporting requirements when the registrar is investigating a potential act of professional misconduct or incompetence, and also includes that the registrar must report findings to the complaints committee instead of the council of the association. It also adds the requirement to report the findings of the investigation to the subject of the investigation.

So really, it appears as though schedule 15 is allowing for a greater sense of clarity, as well as transparency and, hopefully, accountability. I hope it does achieve this desired result, and I hope that's something that the professional engineers or the PEO council also support.

Schedule 16 concerns the Retirement Homes Act and, again, is minor technical amendments.

Schedule 17 is the Securities Act. Again, this is very surprising to me: This government, which has often been criticized for its lack of consultation and its unwillingness to be forward-facing, to be outward-facing and to travel bills across the province, is again in a situation where they're changing the consultation period or written feedback period from 90 days to 60 days. It's curious to me that we are in a time where we're thinking about a more narrow window for people to be involved. It's strange. It's interesting.

Schedule 18 is the St. Lawrence Parks Commission Act. It adds a clause to section 6 of the act to allow for the commission to dispose of an interest in land by the grant of an easement without the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

We also have schedule 19 which again is changing board composition. I'm not going to say that same part. Again, we have the exact same thing. It's curious that this is only happening at certain institutions and not something that is happening, sweeping across the province. That's something that I sort of find surprising.

Schedule 20 is, again, yet another example of that same thing: changing the chair of the board and their tenure. So it is rather surprising.

On the last red tape reduction bill, we met with folks at committee who discussed living on the Ontario Disability Support Program. They introduced many things—in fact, some of those issues were brought up just moments ago from the member for Parkdale—High Park—which really impacted people's ability to be in a relationship when they're on the Ontario Disability Support Program, because their earnings assessment—basically, somebody would be responsible for another person who might be on the ODSP system if they earn too much. That seems very strange. That seems like red tape that is standing in the way of people and their relationships. To think that simply because somebody earns more, they have to be financially responsible for someone else—it's almost Victorian in nature. It's very antiquated. It's very thoughtless to think that just because someone has more money, that somebody is less disabled and in less need of support. That is kind of a judgmental flaw that this government should be looking at. That was something that we discussed in committee meetings on the 10th red tape reduction bill. It still is curiously absent from the 11th red tape reduction bill.

We also heard from folks on the Ontario Disability Support Program who were pointing out the very meagre housing allotment that is provided within the ODSP portion, the housing supplement. It's something that is ridiculous. In the discussion of Bill 139, the red tape reduction bill, in the words of Jeffrey from my riding—Jeffrey writes, "I am writing to express my deep concern

about the persistent issue of disability poverty in our province, Ontario....

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“People with disabilities in Ontario often grapple with multiple challenges that hinder their ability to participate fully in society. These challenges encompass not only financial constraints but also barriers to employment, accessible housing, and appropriate health care. It is essential that we address these issues comprehensively to ensure inclusivity, dignity, and equal opportunities for Ontarians, regardless of their abilities.”

He wanted to bring up some key concerns and suggestions. Jeffrey writes, “Income inequality: Disability support programs need to be more generous and flexible to account for the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. Consider revising and increasing disability benefits to match the cost of living in Ontario, thus helping to alleviate poverty among this marginalized group. This can be very easily done by removing the silly \$556-a-month rent cap and tying the rent to the actual cost of rents based on the city the person lives in. Nowhere in” Ontario “are you going to find any place to rent for \$556 a month.”

Jeffrey goes on to discuss the importance of having affordable access to public transit, talks about employment opportunities, talks about accessible housing with universal design standards implemented. Actually following and implementing the AODA would see such a change within our province. Right now, I know every MPP in this House has constituents who contact them requiring accessible living accommodations, and they’re next to impossible to find. If those were implemented, it wouldn’t be a barrier for folks to find a suitable place to call home if every place was accessible by its very nature. Jeffrey talks about issues with health care access, education and training.

This government would pat itself on the back for different improvements that have been made to social assistance; however, still allowing folks to be underneath the poverty line and indexing that amount—while it’s indexed—is still indexing poverty. It’s still keeping people below that poverty line, which is something that really should be a concern for everyone. We should not be keeping people unable to feed themselves, unable to maintain their housing and unable to be healthy, productive members of our society.

Within this bill as well, within Bill 139, it’s curious to me that we see all this concern about education and educational boards and chairs, but we have seen year over year the underfunding of our education sector. It’s deeply concerning. Myself, as a teacher, I often saw so many kids who were bright. They were very interested in getting their work done, they had all of the skills and all of the abilities, and I often thought, “My goodness. If you’re not born with the right last name or with the right postal code, you may not be able to go on and pursue your dream of post-secondary education.” That is, to my mind, a crime within this province. It’s shocking to think that we do not support kids to pursue that dream of post-secondary education and that there is a financial barrier for it. While I’m not necessarily opposed to lengthening board terms within Bill

139, I think we are really missing what is a huge barrier for students. It is red tape. It is arbitrary. It is decided that only people with money can pursue post-secondary education. That’s deeply concerning.

Now, I look forward to travelling the province as well with the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs in the coming months to discuss and hear from people all across the province about their experience. I’m truly hoping that this government actually listens to the words of people, because last year, we heard many concerns with the lack of suitable primary care within communities. We saw folks recommending this government have more access to nurse practitioners and primary health care providers. We heard from doctors.

I’m glad that one of the recommendations that we did hear at committee, reducing that administrative burden, has been captured within Bill 139, but let us not forget, simply giving the Ontario Medical Association, a wonderful organization—simply abiding by one of their asks is nothing to really pat ourselves on the back for. There’s so much more that we could do in order to make sure that we are addressing the issues within our society.

Recently, I had the opportunity to meet with the RNAO Middlesex Elgin chapter, and it was really an eye-opening experience. They really had a great deal of important stories, important things that they wanted to share with this Legislature, and I wanted to share a couple of those quotes now.

One of them said, “We need safer working conditions. A lot of us are subject to regular violence and abuse from patients and visitors. We need our employers to be held accountable to keeping us safe, and a provincial strategy for creating safer working conditions.”

I could not agree more. Nurses do a truly wonderful job. They see people on possibly the worst days of their lives, and it takes a person who is mentally strong, it takes a person who is physically strong, it takes a person who is strong on the inside as well—whatever word you want to choose to define that. Unfortunately, because of the difficulties of the pandemic, we have seen them facing some of the worst abuse imaginable.

We see people who are struggling with long wait times, unable to access emergency rooms that have been closed in rural communities and then finally getting to receive their service, and the first person they see, that nurse, that caring person who is looking after them—unfortunately, by that point, people can be very aggressive, sometimes violent. We know people are struggling with mental health concerns. Nurses are really on the front lines of seeing that sort of impact, that sort of abuse, and that’s something that we need to make sure that we are supporting our hard-working nurses in across the province.

But also, I’m thinking about the skills pipeline for the incoming generation of those health care providers. The RNAO pointed out some really glaring gaps that I think need to be addressed. Here’s a quote that I’d like to share: “As a clinical instructor is not unusual for me to have to pair a student with a newly hired new graduate nurse. Oftentimes the most experienced nurse on the unit has less

than two years of nursing experience. How are students supposed to learn when their mentors are still learning themselves?"

This government has much to do to address red tape of their own creation, their "blue tape." Bill 124, which was an affront, an attack on nurses, limiting them to a 1% wage increase at a time of enormous inflation, and then to continually appeal that and fight that within court, to throw money at a legal battle that they were never going to win, to slap, to kick nurses when they were down is something that is wrong.

We also heard from home care nurses, who were not affected by Bill 124 and the settlement. It is truly upsetting. One of those quotes from a community nurse says, "We are struggling to find people who want to work in the community because their pay is so much lower than bedside nurses', yet they are expected to do the exact same work. Our patients in the community are sicker than before."

Anecdotally, just to share a few of their concerns: People are being discharged from the hospital needing simple daily wound care, something that should not be too much to ask, and nurses are telling me about individuals having to wait 28 days to get that simple wound care. You think about something that should not be escalating into a greater problem that has actually become far, far worse. That's something that this government could take care of.

So, Speaker, as I conclude my remarks, Bill 139, the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, is in a way a pleasant distraction. It seems to me as though this government is using this, especially at this time, in this moment, to distract from all of the other things that they're responsible for and all of the other things that they are potentially neglecting. Whether it is the carving up of the greenbelt, the MZO's that were pushed forward and are now back-peddled upon, the upcoming RCMP investigation, the ridiculous King's Counsel appointees, it seems as though this is an opportunity, or is being used as an opportunity, for the government to sort of try to save face, to try to pretend as though they're doing something positive, rather than being embroiled in scandals and all of these sagas that they have done before.

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This is something that the official opposition will be supporting. It is not something that we find anything particularly odious about. There's nothing deeply disturbing. There's nothing morally wrong with this; I mean, this does not contain provisions for coyotes to be hunted in enclosed pens. But there is really so much missing. This does not address all of the red tape that this government has actually created—blue tape: removing rent control in buildings first occupied after 2018; not plugging the hole of vacancy decontrol which the Liberals opened up in their foolishness. This government has not yet plugged up that hole allowing landlords to kick good people out so they can jack up the rent to whatever the market can withstand.

We see so many seniors in our communities right now. We know that their pensions are not going up enough. And

when these purpose-built rental buildings are being sold, we have landlords who simply want to get rid of those wonderful tenants, those people who have paid for those buildings, those people who have lived there for decades, who have raised families in there because they feel that those folks aren't paying enough. That is giving short shrift to our seniors who deserve far more of our care, far more of our support to make sure they maintain their housing. That they don't fall into homelessness. That they're not living in their cars. That they're living in peace, they're living comfortably, they're living with respect and they're being supported by this province.

So Speaker, I look forward to the 12th red tape reduction bill from this government and I look forward to them actually listening to folks in the community during the budget consultations. Learn what people are actually experiencing within the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for questions.

Interjections.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'd like to join in applause for the member for London North Centre. Doing 60 minutes like that is, I know, truly a skill.

Your colleague from Niagara Falls mentioned about the title of the bill and about the "common sense" piece, and I was reminded of someone in my constituency named Dr. Jennifer Bondy. She was in high school when a previous Premier was actually in office—to just show the distance in time.

But before I go down that road, I appreciate your mention of the Professional Engineers Act. I'm happy to support what they're doing, because I've been through the licencing process. I'm happy to discuss with you.

My question is this: We estimate that reviewing and revising the key forms identified by the Ontario Medical Association will save doctors up to 95,000 hours every year. I believe you've said that you think that's worth supporting; I just want to hear you say it once again.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for his question. I've got to tell you, Speaker, I was sorely tempted when he was asking his question to stand and ask for a point of order. I don't mean to be flip or to be juvenile.

I do want to thank the member for bringing up something that is also curious in this bill, which is the title itself. The title itself brings shivers down our spine, here as the official opposition. Myself, I was a high school student during the Mike Harris years and the Common Sense Revolution, where we saw a billion dollars stripped out of education. We saw 28 hospitals close. We saw 6,000 nurses laid off. The billion dollars that was removed from education at the time has never been made up by the Liberal government. We saw, really, a time where students, educators felt threatened. And it's never been fixed since then.

I hope that this government understands that education is an investment, not a cost.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question? I recognize the member for Scarborough North. South?

Ms. Doly Begum: Southwest.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Scarborough Southwest. North, south, west.

Ms. Doly Begum: All of them. Thank you very much, Speaker.

I've got quite a few favourite schedules in this bill, and I thank the member for speaking to this. It's very informative. Schedule 9 changes the definition of "minister" so that it names the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, and changes the term "businesses" to one provision. I found it interesting, because when we talk about red tape reduction—and there's some aspects of universities and colleges. One of the things that university students right now are facing is the lack of funding that our province is making to post-secondary education, which is resulting in a lot of international students coming in, which is great, but now universities are relying on that funding in order to operate. We don't have enough funding in universities.

Wouldn't you consider it to be red tape to not have enough support within our post-secondary education? Because now our students are having really high tuition fees. That is red tape that I would have liked to see—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for a response.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough Southwest for an excellent question. Education should be near and dear to all of our hearts, but we've seen a government that since 2018 has actually reduced spending on post-secondary education, I believe, by 11% since 2018. In fact, Ontario is the lowest of the low when it comes to funding post-secondary education. The last number I remember—and I believe this is a year out of date—is that the government of Ontario would have to increase expenditures on post-secondary education by 43.5%. That's not to be first; that's to be second last.

Ontario, despite being the richest province, spends the least amount on education and the least amount on social services. We have the fewest nurses per capita. We spend the least amount on health care. These are investments. These are targeted investments, ones that will see dividends in the long term. It's an upstream investment, and I wish that the government would understand that concept.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member from London North Centre for his remarks on this bill, the fall red tape reduction. Part of our strategy here with this bill is to make Ontario one of the safest places to work. With that, we are doing a review of the joint health and safety committee certification training standards. We're also improving our database of almost three million records for workers who have taken mandatory safety training. This makes it easier for employers to verify that workers have taken the training and are working at heights, and know the health and safety committee certifications that they have.

My question to the member is, would you support the bill based on this, to allow workplace health and safety measures be improved in such a manner?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Workplace health and safety is an absolutely fundamental, key, critical issue. It's something that the NDP will always stand up for and will always support. Earlier in my debate, I mentioned that nurses who are on the front lines are facing increased violence and increased attacks while simply doing their job. The amount of nurses who I saw within the recent meeting who were talking about being punched, being kicked, being hit, being spat upon is unconscionable.

But also, this government—unfortunately, we've seen them really not addressing the gaps that are within the WSIB system. I was speaking with police officers last night who were not provided presumptive coverage for post-traumatic stress disorder, who were having to report within a certain timeline—which actually undermines all of our understanding about mental health. We need to make a lot of changes when it comes to supporting workers within this province, and that's on this government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member, especially for the reminding of the important contribution of Banting and Best, and how important the common good is when it comes to having a healthy community.

I also noticed that you talked a lot about that this bill includes reducing red tape for our medical practitioners. The OMA has asked that they reduce the forms that keep them away from direct care to the patient, but this government did ignore the OMA's other ask. There is red tape when it comes to medical care, but we still see 2.5 million people with no family doctor. The crisis in primary care is huge. Could this have been an opportunity in this bill or other bills where the government actually takes seriously the crisis in our health care, not just tinkering around the edges with more red tape bills?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for an excellent question, and I'd like to thank you for recognizing the important contributions of Drs. Banting and Best.

During the round table, we also heard from many people who could not access those continuous glucose monitors that are saving diabetics' lives each and every single day. We heard from somebody who was lucky enough to have private insurance coverage to have one. It woke him up in the middle of the night. It notified his partner. He would have died. He could have also suffered loss of limb, he could have suffered eye damage, but because of having access to that important life-changing device, it saved his health and his life. We also heard from a PhD student who had to sign up and have a muscle biopsy performed just so she could have access to a continuous glucose monitor for a short period of time, an invasive procedure just to have that life-saving care.

Alberta provides that sort of coverage for all diabetics, type 1 and type 2. Ontario can do the same by cutting that red tape for people who need diabetes care.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Madam Speaker, I invite the member from London North Centre to turn to schedule 10

of the act, because I'm going to ask him a question about that. I want to give him a chance to take a look at it. That section 10 proposes to establish a new minimum penalty, raising it from \$2,500 to \$5,000, for failing to comply with an order under the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act.

My question to the member is this: Does he believe that a minimum fine of \$5,000 is too low, too high or just about right for failing to comply with an order?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Essex for the question. Really, it is within this government's purview to set the fines as they see fit and the minimum penalties as they see fit.

The member's question does make me think about other delegated authorities that this government has chosen to ignore, that this government has chosen not to investigate. We saw a government who, for their long 15 years of opposition, were diametrically opposed to the regulatory authority known as Tarion. In fact, they promised again and again and again that they were going to overhaul Tarion. And yet, when they ended up taking office, that promise was broken, because they actually created yet another layer of bureaucracy, yet more red tape, which is the Home Construction Regulatory Authority. In fact, they decided one wasn't enough. They wanted—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for further debate. I recognize the member from Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The member from Essex has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This is a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1643 to 1713.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Members, please take your seats.

Mr. Leardi has moved the adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise and remain standing to be counted by the Clerks.

All those opposed of the motion, please rise and remain standing to be counted by the Clerks.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 49; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion carried.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

WORKING FOR WORKERS FOUR
ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À OEUVRER
POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, QUATRE

Mr. Piccini moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 149, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / *Projet de loi 149, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi, le travail et d'autres questions.*

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Mr. Piccini, you have the floor.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, I'm very excited and honoured to rise today to speak and debate Bill 149, the Working for Workers Four Act, 2023. This is exciting and I will be debating today and joined by two parliamentary assistants: the member for Mississauga–Malton and the member for Scarborough Centre. I would like to acknowledge their friendship and advice, the hard work they're doing at labour, and for their constituents. I also want to thank the Premier for his leadership and support, not only on this bill, but the support he's giving—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Guys, we can't hear him. We can't hear him.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the minister. If we could just bring the tone down a little bit.

Minister, back to you. You may resume debate.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, I'd like to say they're excited about my bill; I just think they're excited to get to dinner.

I wanted to thank the incredible work that the Premier has done to support our ministry on this bill and the support he's provided for workers across Ontario. He's led the way to ensure that we have the backs of workers in Ontario like no government before.

And finally, on a personal note, I'd like to thank the great team at the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development—both on the ministry side and on the department side—who get up each and every day to work for workers in the province of Ontario. I thank them. A special thank you, as well, to the constituency team, who haven't seen me much lately and who've been doing a fine job in Northumberland–Peterborough South while I've been out tabling this important legislation.

We're working to spread opportunity and good jobs across our great province of Ontario, strengthening worker supports and protections, tackling labour shortages and promoting economic growth. That's why we're expanding on groundbreaking actions that we've taken under the first three Working for Workers Acts by introducing new legislation, amendments and actions that will help workers earn more, increase protections and support newcomers in this great province of Ontario. By putting workers first, we can bring the Ontario dream within reach of more Ontarians and ensure that this province remains the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Of course, I mentioned this bill builds on the three previous Working for Workers bills. In the first Working for Workers bill—and I'll take you briefly down memory lane and tie it into what we're doing today.

Under the first one, we stood up for families, helping workers to disconnect from their job in the increasingly connected world, helping them to spend more time with

loved ones by requiring workplaces to develop and share policies on when and how workers can disconnect.

We made it easier for internationally trained workers to practise their professions here in Ontario. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to speak to some of the 9,000 workers who have benefited from the bridge-the-gap program, who are now practising on the front lines in health care. It matters, it's working, and that was all made possible under the first Working for Workers bill.

And we introduced the most comprehensive temporary help agency framework in the country, which will be coming into force in the coming months. I'd like to thank members across the aisle and all over this place for providing important feedback as we work to get that framework right.

We followed these workplace improvements with our second Working for Workers Act by introducing the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, 2022. Once in force, it will establish foundational rights for digital platform workers who bring food and packages to our doors or help us get to where we need to go. In this bill, we also introduced measures to protect worker privacy by requiring employers to disclose how they're electronically monitoring workers, and increasing maximum fines for executives of businesses who fail to provide a safe working environment to among the highest in Canada. And to reduce overdose deaths, we mandated life-saving naloxone kits on high-risk workplace sites.

1720

Speaker, I spoke to some in the construction sector, who have really benefited from this and said how impactful this has been, and more importantly, I have spoken to those who have benefited from the training to administer these life-saving devices.

Just this September, the House passed the third Working for Workers Act, increasing maximum fines for corporations convicted of occupational health and safety offences and establishing the highest maximum fines in Canada for employers and recruiters convicted of taking foreign nationals' passports or work permits to the highest levels in Canada. I mean, if you exploit a worker in the province of Ontario, you're going to be hit with the highest fines in Canada.

We've built on previous measures to help internationally trained workers register in regulated professions faster, working with regulatory bodies. We stood up for members of the Canadian Armed Forces by expanding reasons for military reservist leave and reducing the time reservists need to be employed before taking leave. In this new bill, you're about to hear how we're doing even more for heroes in uniform. On the margins of November 11, it couldn't come at a more important time.

We strengthened rules on construction sites to require clean, well-lit washrooms and "women's only" washrooms. Of course, that sounds like common sense, but previous governments could have done that. They didn't. We did, and the stats speak for themselves. We've seen a 28% increase of women in apprenticeship registration and over a 130% increase in women in building and con-

struction trades. For us to build the hospitals, the public transit, the schools that we sorely lacked under the previous Liberal-NDP coalition government, we cannot ignore 50% of our workforce.

We're not stopping there. Our new working for workers bill builds on the previous ground-breaking legislation that's already helping millions of workers here in the province of Ontario. It responds to the rapidly changing pace of work in Ontario and contains important proposals to attract, retain and support workers; increase economic competitiveness; and help Ontario businesses find the skilled workers that they need.

This bill, if passed, would help Ontario meet these goals by focusing on four key areas: protecting workers' pay in the hospitality sector; increasing transparency in the hiring process; strengthening worker protections; and removing barriers for newcomers finding meaningful jobs in their communities that they call home.

All of these changes have one goal in mind: to put workers in the province of Ontario first. An economy that doesn't work for workers doesn't work at all. The changes we've made and those that are part of this new bill are all common sense and long overdue.

I'm proud to start by talking about protecting service workers in the province of Ontario. This is one group of workers who are so important to our economy, yet who often get taken advantage of by circumstances out of their control. There are service workers. I'd like to thank the team at Mildred's Temple Kitchen and Donna. Her values there—I spoke with her about this—are putting people first. She does that with her workers whom I had a chance to meet.

They're the people who cut our hair, clean our hotel rooms, serve our food and mix our drinks. People who work in the accommodation and food service industry make up 60% of Ontario's workforce. These are 400,000 workers in the province of Ontario.

I was proud to meet with the Guled Warsame, president of the Unite Here hospitality workers union. He and I had a great conversation the other day at Central Ontario Building Trades. I'd like to thank him for the work that he's doing and members of his union who joined me for that announcement. I look forward to seeing him in this place in the weeks to come.

I don't need to tell you how hard his workers and how hard the hundreds of thousands of other workers in Ontario work for their pay. The restaurant industry is synonymous with a fast pace, long hours, physical demands, people who work on their feet all day and—let's be honest—the occasional rude, bad customer. All the while, these folks need to keep a smile on their face and a "can do" attitude, because tips for good service can make or break their night. Sometimes, these folks—the ones who do so much to make sure we have a good time when we're out—have tips and wages illegally withheld or docked for reasons beyond their control: for example, when customers leave without paying, dine and dash or gas and dash, or when they're expected to work for free in the term of an unpaid trial shift before being hired. Speaker, that's why our bill

includes changes to better protect restaurant workers and others in the service industry. If passed, these changes would make it clear that employers, not just in the restaurant industry but all across the service sector and beyond, are prohibited from deducting when customers dine and dash, haircut and dash, gas and dash or anything else.

I would like to take a moment to thank the member from Mississauga–Malton for his leadership in standing up on the gas-and-dash issue. Thank you for your leadership.

The fear of wages being withheld has led to tragic consequences, including workers being injured or worse while trying to stop someone from running out on their meal or not paying at the pump. Speaker, no tank of gas is worth someone's life. That's why we're making it clear in the act that if someone steals from a store, runs from a restaurant or gas pump, we're going to take action.

Furthermore, if passed, our changes would explicitly ban unpaid trial shifts. We need to end the practice of many restaurant workers being expected to work for free, which is all still too common. You wouldn't ask an office worker, a banker or a lawyer to work for free, so why would we accept that of a server?

Our proposed changes would also require employers to disclose and publicly post if they have a policy of sharing worker tips to help ensure employers are more transparent about how tips are distributed in the workplace—something that's only allowed, by the way, if they perform the same work as their staff. Coming from rural Ontario, I know many great employers do that. Empowering workers with transparency on that process is common sense, and it's the right thing to do.

Finally, in response to the rise of digital payment platforms in the service industry, which can include fees for workers to access their tips as well as technical security issues, our changes would also require employers who pay tips using direct deposit to allow their employees to select which account they want them deposited into. Imagine working hard, standing on your feet, dealing with crappy customers all day, just to find out that to access your tip money you've got to get a deduction because of the app that you're being required to use. We're putting the power back in the hands of workers, ensuring they choose where that money will be deposited. This helps workers keep more money in their pockets and keeps unnecessary fees away.

We will continue to use every tool in our tool box to ensure Ontario is a province where hard work pays off and dreams come true.

Secondly, Speaker, I'm proud to speak to the work we're doing to support injured workers and ensuring they get the compensation they deserve. Every worker deserves to come home safely to their family at the end of their shift, and every workplace injury and illness should be preventable. My ministry invests over \$100 million annually in workplace health and safety for this very reason, but we know there are still 134,000 workers off injured in the province of Ontario today. They deserve the support of a

government and a Premier who have their backs. This is often the result of physical or mental injuries or illness they suffer on the job.

I want to thank Jeff Lang for his leadership at the WSIB and for the work he's been doing to support injured workers in the province of Ontario—Jeff and the entire team at the WSIB.

While the number one goal is always to give these men and women the support they need to return to work, we know it's not always possible. That's why our legislation would support injured workers by enabling super indexing, which increases Workplace Safety and Insurance Board benefits—increases the benefits for injured workers. This would protect injured workers' and survivors' benefits against the effects of the rising cost of living, because we know the pandemic has hit injured workers hard, and they deserve to know that their government has their back. Speaker, I can't believe this hasn't been done in the past.

The additional indexation increases would be applied to all active worker and survivor claims in the WSIB system. We're working to support injured workers in this province. While someone is recovering from an injury or occupational disease, they shouldn't have to worry about how they're paying their bills.

Our legislation also includes measures to improve cancer coverage for firefighters. This builds on previous action we took under Working for Workers 3, expanding cancer coverage for firefighters. You know, Speaker, firefighters are four times more likely to get an occupational diagnosis of cancer than anyone else in Ontario. That is just shocking, Speaker. They're not only exposed to heat, smoke and hazardous physical demands but toxic chemicals. They put their lives on the line; they run into buildings as we run from them. We owe it to the firefighters and fire investigators to ensure they have fast and easy access to compensation for work-related diseases if they fall ill.

1730

Unfortunately, that's not always the case, and I'd like to share the story of Captain Craig Bowman. Speaker, it's important that people know in this place that sometimes good policy starts with a story.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of the member of the opposition, the member from Welland, who joined me for that announcement, Speaker.

Speaker, Captain Craig Bowman served for over 22 years as a distinguished member of the Welland firefighter service. He was diagnosed with esophageal cancer, a deadly diagnosis. While he was fighting that diagnosis and was in hospice, his wife, Alisen Bowman, made a call to Premier Ford. She made a call to Premier Ford to plead for expanded WSIB supports for that family and countless other firefighter families who currently were not supported by WSIB coverage. Her husband, Craig Bowman, hung on because he wanted to know that his family would be looked after. Regardless of whatever divine power folks in this Legislature look up to, he hung on, and the Premier called her back and said we would get that done for her. Well, later that next day, Captain Craig Bowman passed.

Speaker, I was honoured to speak with Alisen. I was honoured to speak with her heroic daughter, Lexi. Boy—for everyone who spoke that day, we were all amazed with the strength and courage of Lexi. She has taken a turn in her career to devote herself to being an advocate, to speaking from fire hall to fire hall, advocating for those occupational exposures. And I'd like to thank the entire Bowman family for their advocacy.

I'd like to also acknowledge Troy Cummerson, Mathew Howe and Duncan Gibson—just a few of the families I've reached out to since we made this announcement.

I'd also like to thank the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association for their incredible work. They've become friends over the past number of months—Greg Horton, Bob McCutcheon, Gavin Jacklyn, just to name a few—for their leadership.

So what is our legislation going to do to remember the legacy of Captain Craig Bowman? Speaker, this legislation, if passed, would give Ontario the lowest service requirement for esophageal cancer coverage in Canada—the lowest service requirement—by reducing the period of time they need to have been employed prior to their diagnosis from 25 to 15 years. And that was an explicit act from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and actually builds and increases coverage from the private member's bill put forward by the member of the opposition. So for all the things you read in the news, this is this place working. This is this place working for good.

If passed, this would be applied to all claims, retroactive back to January 1, 1960. This would apply to firefighters who are full-time, part-time and volunteer, as well as firefighters employed by First Nations band councils and fire investigators. We introduced these changes so heroes who are sick can focus on getting better.

This not just for firefighters and fire investigators but also their families, and we know the impact that this can have on families. We need to make sure no family has to go through what Captain Bowman's family endured. And, again, I want to thank Alisen and her family for their leadership, for their strength, for their courage, for their advocacy and for allowing me into their life and to learn a bit about her remarkable husband.

Speaker, as I talk about supporting workers, I also want to recognize Ontario's newest workers. Every year, more immigrants and refugees choose to settle in Ontario over any other province in Canada—any other province—and many of those who choose to settle in other provinces, we know, end up in Ontario. They do so in search of greater opportunities for themselves and their families. New Canadians bring a wealth of knowledge, skills and abilities. They create businesses, fill in-demand jobs and help build strong economies.

I know I've had family members in my family who have travelled long distances, who have crossed oceans to build a better future here. That story is no different than so many in this place who are descendants of immigrants. Finding work is a top priority so that they can build a life

for themselves and their families in their new home, Canada, their new home, Ontario.

Yet, despite attracting some of the best and brightest to our province, we are falling short in making sure they can use their full skill sets and competencies, applying them to the workforce here in Ontario. While we're making progress in reducing the labour shortage, there are still 250,000 jobs going unfilled in Ontario every day. We need to ensure that qualified workers are not barred from in-demand jobs by red tape or discrimination. It's just common sense.

When I hear that only one in four new Canadians are actually working in their field, it's unacceptable. How many of us are sick and tired of hopping in a cab in Toronto or an Uber, just to have a conversation with the driver to find out they're a doctor, a nurse or have health care expertise, just to go home to speak to my wife, who's looking after her 98-year-old grandmother, to find out that surgeries are backlogged and that we're tackling a health care system and bringing more people into it?

I'm proud of the leadership of this Premier. I'm proud that we're announcing the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant, so that you can study and practise in rural communities like mine. I'm proud that we've launched the bridge-the-gap program in the budget to help upskill and credential foreign-trained workers so that they can practise in the field of health care. And I'm proud of the steps we're taking in this bill to ensure that it's not anymore one in four but that four in four are practising in their field, are responding to a 911 call, are on the front lines of supporting better patient-centred care in Ontario, are building the skyscrapers and affordable housing of tomorrow, who have skills in the skilled trades.

A big shout-out to Skilled Trades Ontario, who are leading Canada in foreign credential recognition. It's important work that we're doing to ensure that immigrants, new Canadians, permanent residents, students, asylum seekers and refugees alike can achieve their full potential when here in Ontario.

Speaker, when I've visited these families and spoken to them, they don't want to live on social assistance in Ontario. They want to work in their fields, they want to provide for their families, and they want to be supported. One of the biggest barriers, we know, is the requirement for Canadian work experience. When you're applying for a job and it says, "List Canadian work experience," if you've driven a combine in the UK or Australia or the United States, and you don't have Canadian work experience, don't apply for the job. But if you're competent in driving a combine, I know I can speak on behalf of many farmers looking at succession planning, they want you. They need you. You shouldn't be doing something else. If you're a nurse and you're educated—royal college in Pakistan, for example—you should be working here in your field. If there's a gap in competency, we have programs—Skills Development Fund and so many others, the largest skills development fund in Canada—to help bridge that gap. But let's provide you that opportunity. Let's not exclude you from applying.

That Canadian work experience—we're not saying you don't need to be competent. We're not saying you don't need to have work experience. We're saying that the door that slams shut just because you didn't have Canadian work experience—that we're opening that door for new Canadians. We're letting you get a foot in the door. This is a game-changer.

I want to thank executive director Sara Asalya and Pedro Monteros from Newcomer Women's Services Toronto. They've been a beneficiary of the Skills Development Fund—I'm going to mention it again—which is the largest skills development fund in Canadian history, under the leadership of this Premier. Sara recognized the work that this Premier is doing to support newcomers. She does remarkable work. She said to me, "You know, Dave, we've taken asylum seekers out of shelters in Toronto who have nursing degrees, who have doctorates and who have master's degrees. They now have jobs." We heard the empowered story of one of the speakers who spoke that day I made that announcement who is now working, who is now paying taxes and who is contributing to our economy.

In fact, while I'm talking about the economy, I want to give you a stat. When internationally trained newcomers do not work in their professions, what does that cost us? Let's not focus on the negative; let's focus on the positive: If they were working in their fields, we would increase our GDP by \$100 billion. It's a number I can hardly fathom.

1740

Removing unfair barriers for newcomers is not only the right thing to do; it's the smart thing to do in Ontario, so that newcomers can achieve their full potential, contribute to our growing economy, be on the front lines of the skyscrapers I visited when I was downtown visiting LIUNA Local 183, building the transit projects—the largest low-carbon public transit project in North America, the Ontario Line—building the 50 capital hospital projects we have under way today in Ontario, the largest capital build in hospitals in Ontario's history; or the schools in rural Ontario that were shut down under the Liberals.

I remember going to Norwood: Councillor Bernadette Vanderhorst leading the charge, a community growing by 300%, because this Premier has said yes to building homes and not succumbed to NIMBY forces; a community growing by 300%. Families—my mom, who always nudges me when she sees families pushing strollers and says, "Dave, when am I going to be a grandmother?" Now we see that in Norwood, Ontario, and I'm proud to say that we saved that high school from the destructive Liberals. We saved that high school in rural Ontario so that youth can now get an education, so that newcomers settling in our community, their kids, can walk to school and get a better education, because we're building schools like Northglen in Bowmanville, like the new Catholic French school in Cobourg. We're building schools, and I'm fighting for another one in Newcastle too. I'm proud that we have a Premier and a Minister of Education investing in doing that.

Speaker, in our latest bill, we're proposing to prohibit all provincially regulated employers from including a

requirement for Canadian experience in job postings or application forms, like I mentioned. It creates an impossible Catch-22: You can't get Canadian work experience without a job, but you can't get a job without Canadian work experience. So that's gone. If passed, we're taking moves on that. That's going to be really, really big.

We're also supporting programs and expanding the number of students working here under a student visa so that they can work after graduating. I think of, for example, Conestoga's nursing program. Those students today wouldn't be able to work in Ontario; thanks to changes we're making, they will.

Connecting a newcomer with a job he or she is qualified for means more than just a paycheque. It returns a sense of meaning, dignity and purpose to that person. I've seen that in my family. I've seen that in newcomers I spoke to at the women's newcomer centre. It also allows them to provide for their family, and we're lucky to live in a province as rich in talent as Ontario. It's time to unleash the full potential that is this great province of Ontario.

Speaker, you've heard over the last week we've been out what this has meant for newcomers—it has been a game-changer—what this has meant for workers in the hospitality sector, what it has meant when we've said we're launching consultations on banning non-disclosure agreements in the case of sexual misconduct or harassment. My message is clear to those who seek to hide behind NDAs or those big employers who seek to silence victims: Your time is up in the province of Ontario. We're going to—

Interjections.

Hon. David Piccini: And I want to thank the Peterborough YMCA for hosting us to make that announcement—to ensure that when artificial intelligence is used in the hiring process, that it's done so in a transparent manner. We were at the YMCA and we saw the work they're doing to support people getting better jobs and bigger paycheques.

Speaker, I'm proud to serve with a party and a Premier that recognize that we don't measure success for newcomers and the most vulnerable workers by the size of the social service payouts. We're there to support workers, and we're there to support those by expanding worker benefits, by ensuring a robust social-service system, but by getting them the dignity of a pathway to meaningful employment, by ensuring newcomers are practising in their field, by supporting the hospitality workers.

You know, sometimes I'm in this place and I can't help but feel that members of the opposition want to drive a minimum-wage economy. We don't. We want bigger jobs, better jobs, bigger paycheques.

Interjections.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, they're laughing, so I really hope they're going to vote for this bill that's helping people get a leg up.

You see, Speaker, what they want is a bigger government, and they want people to be dependent on them. What I've met when I visited the newcomer centre isn't people who want to be dependent on government. In fact,

most of those people have fled oppressive governments to come here to Canada. They want to achieve their full potential. They want the dignity and meaningful life that is to provide for one's family, to practise in the field they've been educated in—hospitality workers who can get a leg up; the most vulnerable workers in Ontario, who now, thanks to our including salary ranges in job postings, are going to be able to see what they could earn before that daunting process of applying for a new job.

Speaker, these are all common-sense changes to strengthen the Employment Standards Act so that people in Ontario can get a leg up, so that they can achieve their full potential in a province that is building hospitals, a province that's building schools, a province that is building public transit, a province that is recognizing, acknowledging and truly seeing newcomers and the talent that they bring to this province. I'm proud to be part of a Premier doing this. I'm proud to work alongside an incredible group of colleagues of diverse backgrounds who are fighting to build a stronger Ontario. We're going to do it together, Speaker, and I thank you for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: It's always an honour in the House to stand up and speak on the important things that we do for the people of Ontario. Today I'm talking on Bill 149, the Working for Workers Four Act, 2023. I'm so blessed to have my colleagues the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development and the MPP from Scarborough Centre sharing the time.

Madam Speaker, as always, I always like to start by first recognizing the people in my life who make it possible for me to serve the community each and every day. I am so thankful to my family and my extended family for your never-ending support and to my staff for the hard work you do. We started yesterday at 9 o'clock. We worked until midnight. We started again this morning at nine o'clock.

And thank you to the hard-working staff who are standing with us shoulder to shoulder here. You're doing an amazing job.

Applause.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Yes, we can clap for them.

And thank you to the people of Mississauga–Malton for giving me the privilege and the responsibility of representing them. I'm thankful for your trust.

Madam Speaker, we're talking about what is going on in the world today. With the emerging technologies and growing use of artificial intelligence, the world of work is rapidly changing, so your government is changing with it. Under the outstanding leadership of our Premier, since forming the government, we have introduced three Working for Workers bills. These bills responded to these challenges by presenting important proposals that would be of great support to the people of Ontario, whether they are job creators, job seekers or workers.

In 2021, when the Legislature passed our first Working for Workers Act, we ensured our labour laws kept pace

with the new technology, automation and changes in how and where we work. We recognized the importance of personal and family time, requiring larger employers to have a written policy on disconnecting from work. The ESA gave workers more control over their careers, introduced authority to streamline some of the processes for internationally trained newcomers, gave delivery workers the basic human dignity of access to washrooms at a business they're serving, and established mandatory licensing of recruiters and temporary help agencies to protect our vulnerable workers.

As we were doing this, we actually moved the Working for Workers Act 2, wherein we made sure to protect workers. We mandated that certain at-risk workplaces have life-saving naloxone kits on site and workers trained on it. So far, we have distributed over 3,200 kits to businesses across Ontario, so that if there is a need, they don't have to find it; they're able to help the workers. We are doing this to make sure we are taking care of our workers, the people who support the progress of our province.

As we continued this work earlier, now we're proposing changes for digital platform workers. We are proposing to establish a regulatory authority to be able to make rules for digital platform workers and operators that provide clarity and greater flexibility on how pay based on minimum wages compliance must be determined. If passed, we will continue moving forward on implementing the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act.

1750

I wanted to take a moment to remember the time, the memory of January 15, 2000, when I walked through the doors of Pearson airport as an immigrant to Canada and started a new life. Like me, many immigrants came to Canada with varied skills and unique perspectives. Today, there are 2.7 million immigrants in Ontario's labour force, creating new businesses, supporting our communities, filling in-demand jobs and contributing to building strong, vibrant and diverse communities.

However, we know many working-age immigrants are not working in the jobs that match their extensive training or skill level. Only 25% of the internationally trained immigrants in the regulated professions are working in the jobs that match their level of qualification in Ontario. What does that mean, Madam Speaker? It means that recent immigrants with a bachelor's degree are twice as likely as their Canadian-born counterparts to work in jobs that only require only a high-school education. Yet we know that helping internationally trained newcomers work in their own fields will help us increase our revenue, will increase the GDP by up 20-plus billion dollars a year. Over five years, it is \$100 billion of GDP.

What does that mean? More prosperity for Ontario, more money to the people and their families so that they can invest that money into their kids, in their family, in their well-being, and at the end of the day, we all win. It's a win-win situation, Madam Speaker. That is why, under the leadership of this Premier, we are making sure that we are working for our internationally trained workers, and helping.

Regulated professions often rely on third parties to conduct assessments of the qualifications of newcomers. Our proposal would provide our government with the authority to put rules in place to improve transparency and accountability for the assessment of qualifications by regulated professions, especially when they work with these third parties to conduct these assessments.

We're also proposing to increase the number of one-year certificate programs that international students can use to be nominated for permanent residence, which will allow them to stay in Ontario and contribute to our local economy, when we know there are over 250,000 jobs going unfilled. Those 250,000 jobs mean 250,000 pay-cheques uncollected. We want to make sure to give the international students enrolled in Ontario graduate certificate programs, including in those fields with in-demand jobs, the ability to access the OINP, Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program, which will open the stream program to a wider pool of candidates who have the skills that we need in Ontario to progress. By streamlining processing, it would also help to reduce confusion around the requirements for applicants and would bring more efficiency to the program.

When we invest in workers, we are investing in the backbone of our society and those who are the driving force behind progress and innovation. I know that the measures we have outlined would help to position Ontario as a front-runner in creating safer and more transparent work environments while keeping our economy strong.

If passed, not only would the working for workers bill protect our current workers and help workers to earn more, it would also support newcomers. These are the three pillars through which we can empower individuals to dream, achieve and contribute meaningfully to Ontario. We can and we will create environments where every person can thrive and reach their full potential, regardless of their background or circumstance.

I want to close my comments by calling on all members on both sides—we have a chance to stand up. Join me in supporting Bill 149, the Working for Workers Four Act, 2023. Actions speak louder than words. It is an opportunity for the opposition to stand up for the workers and support the progress of our workers of Ontario.

I yield my time to my fellow parliamentary assistant, the MPP for Scarborough Centre. But before I go, I want to urge everyone: Let's come together, work together for the prosperity of a better Ontario, a stronger Ontario, a prosperous Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Scarborough Centre.

Mr. David Smith: Before I start here this afternoon, I would like to certainly thank Minister Piccini and my PA colleague, Deepak—sorry; PA Anand. I'm honoured and delighted to be a part of this team, because we are doing some great things. I heard the word at the beginning of this conversation about “new.” When I look at new, I don't see my current minister in this portfolio as anything new. He took off like a jet plane right away as he got into the ministry and started doing some real great things. We are

a strong team working together to make certain that Working for Workers Four Act, 2023, second reading—we are hoping that we can get the support from all the members across the aisle, because I see this as a full family/colleagues. I'm hoping that at the end of the exercise, we will be able to make firm decisions that help to take care of over 300,000 jobs going unfilled in Ontario. It's very important.

I am pleased and delighted to rise in the House today for the second reading of the Working for Workers Four Act, 2023, to develop these proposals to further support and protect workers and families. I also would like to add my thanks to our Premier for his tremendous leadership and support for Working for Workers Acts that have passed over the last three years. Madam Speaker, the changes we have made through these acts are already helping millions of people in Ontario.

Back in March, we proudly introduced the Working for Workers Act, 2023, which was passed by the House in September and given royal assent just last month. With that legislation, we took measures to help internationally trained workers, building a provision on Canadian experience requirements to ensure alternatives wouldn't stand in the way of newcomers who aspire to contribute to our communities.

For our brave military reservists, Madam Speaker, who put their career on hold to join military missions at home and abroad, reservist leave reasons were extended to include physical and mental health recovery for participating in Canadian Forces operations. The time required to be employed to be eligible for reservist leave was reduced from three months to two months, and the time required was removed entirely if the leave is to assist during a domestic emergency.

Our commitment to work safety remains unwavering. We increased the maximum time and maximum fine for a corporation convicted of an Occupational Health and Safety Act violation to \$2 million, emphasizing our dedication to put workers' safety above all else. We began to work to enhance transparency in the workplace, and the legislation created regulation-making authorities that, if approved—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): My apologies. It's now time for private members' public business. I thank you, and we'll continue debate after.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOVING ONTARIANS SAFELY ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À ASSURER À LA POPULATION ONTARIENNE DES DÉPLACEMENTS SÛRS

Mr. Harden moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to provide for consequences to those who cause injury or death to certain road users / *Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour prévoir les conséquences qu'encourent les personnes qui causent des blessures à certains usagers de la route ou leur décès.*

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

1800

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to begin on a note of gratitude. Joining us again in the members' gallery today are some of Ontario's leading road safety advocates, people who have spent a long time working for safety in our neighbourhoods. I shouted out most of them this morning, but I want to particularly shout out again, because of the three-hour trek she made from Wasaga Beach, Peggy Hawthorn from the United Senior Citizens of Ontario, representing 300,000 seniors in the province of Ontario. Thank you, Peggy, and so many others there.

The bill before this House, Speaker, Bill 40, the Moving Ontarians Safely Act, is also endorsed by fantastic organizations like Good Roads; Ontario Cycling; as I mentioned, the United Senior Citizens of Ontario; Spinal Cord Injury Ontario; Cycle Toronto; Bike Ottawa; Friends and Families for Safe Streets—I could spend the 12 minutes thanking with gratitude the people who have come behind this bill. But I think it's more important, for the purposes of our debate this evening, to talk about why this bill is on the floor.

To begin on a note of modesty and honesty, this isn't about Ottawa Centre or anything I had to do. Bill 40 is the culmination of 10 years of work in this place. This precise bill before the members of this House has been on the floor of this august House for 10 years, so I'm only the latest person to do so.

This is not a New Democrat-specific bill, either. Liberals have risen in this place to speak in favour of this bill. Conservative members have. I know the member for Guelph, in his capacity as the Green leader of Ontario, has spoken in favour of this bill.

Road safety is not a partisan issue. This is one of these things that we should be able to get behind.

Why? Well, let's point to the Ministry of Transportation Ontario's own research, Speaker. In their latest road safety annual report from 2022, they noted that there were precisely 3,066 injuries of pedestrians as a consequence of reckless driving, and 466 of those were major incidents or fatal incidents. I want to move to cyclists, where the same research pointed out that in 2022, there were 1,412 injuries of cyclists, and 135 of those were major incidents, critical or fatal.

And what I learned in preparing for this debate tonight—when I consulted first responder groups like police who are called to these incidents, or when I contacted folks who work in emergency rooms from across Ontario, they told me, “Joel, those numbers are way understated.” What you are actually looking at at the moment in Ontario is the rate of 20 people admitted to ERs

per day across this province because of reckless driving which causes serious injury or death.

All of us are political representatives in this building, Speaker, and I want all of us to think about what it would look like: 135 major or fatal cycling collisions, acts of road violence; 466 major or fatal pedestrian acts of violence. It's like entire apartment buildings that we would canvass, filled with people who are critically injured or dead. And behind all these incidents are human beings, and I want to read into the record some of the people that we met in the course of doing this research.

I want to talk about Serene Summers from Ottawa, who on February 13, 2012, was hit as she was crossing Meadowlands Drive in my city. She was critically injured and will live the rest of her life with a debilitating brain injury. The gentleman who did this fled the scene and later tried to sell his car to avoid responsibility. Thankfully, he was found by police investigation, but if you can believe it, Speaker, he originally tried to attend his sentencing organized by a justice of the peace virtually by Zoom—not facing Serene; not trying to hear about how this had changed her life. The justice of the peace dismissed the case, demanded the gentleman be before him and Serene and her family. This is what she said:

“I was a happy person. A happy kid. I played volleyball. I liked to hang out with friends. Ride my bike. Anything and everything a normal kid would do. My goal was to start up a babysitting business.

“Then Feb. 13, 2022, happened. I was hit by a car—your car. You hit me, backed up to see what you hit, then drove off. You lied to the police when they asked about your involvement. You said you'd sold your car the day before. All this while I was lying in a hospital bed for weeks and weeks, crying in pain. We begged you to come forward and take responsibility for what you did. But you didn't.”

In this incident, what happened to Serene Summers resulted in a one-year driver's licence suspension and a fine of \$2,000. I believe, as I stand in this House before you all, the minimum threshold for anybody found responsible for hurting or killing someone in a situation like Serene's should at least be a one-year driver's licence suspension, and that's what Bill 40 does.

I want to talk about Abu Bakr Sayed. The member from Scarborough Southwest introduced me to Mr. Sayed. His brother, Azfer Sayed, was with me this morning as we did a media conference on Bill 40. Mr. Sayed was hit while he was crossing the street in his neighbourhood in Scarborough, and the person who hit him—this was not the first time this 30-year-old had been involved in a situation of impaired reckless driving. He is currently in jail. But what Bill 40 does is introduce measures by which, when you have your first encounter of reckless driving, you are required, as is the case in the state of Oregon, to undertake mandatory driver re-education. You're required to perform community service. You're required to be present at the victim impact statement—personally, not through a designate—to hear the harm you caused.

I want to believe in my heart, Speaker, most people who are responsible for acts of road violence would want to

have remorse. And we want laws in this province to try to reach them, to effect that remorse, to effect a change in behaviour. I want to believe—and this is sad—that if Ontario had mandatory driver re-education for this 30-year-old man, we may have prevented Abu Bakr Sayed's death. But as it stands, his family is grieving.

Azfer said, "We recognize this is not an isolated incident in Toronto. There are numerous victims' families who are experiencing the same nightmares. We can only demand stronger legislation to ensure road safety."

I want to talk about Jess Spieker, who we introduced this morning, who's sitting right over there, who was critically injured in 2015 on her bicycle by a woman driving an SUV, who was fined—if you can believe it—\$300, and was driving soon after this act happened. The crash threw Jess off her bike and left her with a broken spine, a brain injury and extensive soft tissue damage. The tissue damage in turn caused serious blood-clot-related complications that nearly killed her as she was attempting to recover. The woman who hit Jess appealed the fine and retained the right to drive.

This is what I think we must change. We have been debating changing it for 10 years, but there's an opportunity before us. And let me be very clear: There's an opportunity before us to change it because people like Jess Spieker, through her grief, decided to make her grief public and become a public advocate, like Meredith Wilkinson, like so many others in this province, and I thank them tonight for that.

What I've learned in the course of research for this legislation is that tragedies are happening all the time with road violence. Just recently, on November 12, Patrick Lynch, in Kingston, was hit—hit not far from the Collins Bay correctional institution, to people who have been to Kingston before—on a big, wide road used by Kingston cyclists all the time. Patrick is somebody—if you want to talk about cyclists, Speaker, this is a gentleman who cycled across Australia, from Brisbane to Melbourne. This is a gentleman who rode his bicycle from Kingston to Charleston, South Carolina. This is somebody who educated others in the Kingston cycle club about how to ride safely, how to take a lane, how to wear bright, reflective clothing, how to make sure that your bike could be seen by drivers.

Now, this incident—this tragedy, I should say—is being investigated by the Kingston Police. But I want to believe that someone like Patrick deserved better than this. And the person responsible for this incident deserved better than it too.

1810

This is where, as I end my remarks for this debate, I want to be honest, and my friends over there know this well, in saying that this bill—which I really hope we can get behind together and pass at second reading and send to committee so any amendments my friends feel need to be made can be made—is going to be part of the solution to the problem, but it will not solve all the problems. Even the preliminary reporting about what happened to Patrick Lynch tells me that there's a lot we need to do in the

province of Ontario to make sure roads are designed safely towards a vision of zero fatalities, zero injuries and everybody being able to get where they need to go in their community safely and without harm. That helps the vulnerable road user, but let's be honest: Can you imagine living with the guilt of critically injuring or killing somebody with your vehicle? It helps that person too. It makes our communities safe.

Speaker, as I end, I want to invite us to consider what this moment is. It's a moment where we can actually come together in this province to finally say, after 10 years of debate, 10 years of discussion, that the time for discussion is over and that we can come behind the evidence which leads us to believe we needn't fill up entire apartment buildings with people who are either dead or critically injured as a consequence of road violence. We can do better. We can and must do better.

We often stand in this place and we say, "Let's work together more," and it's hard, because the purpose of this place is adversarial. We're always arguing with the government because we disagree on stuff. It's a critical function of this place. But as I began, Speaker, I said road safety is not a partisan issue and I believe that in my heart. The way we can get past unnecessary adversarial debate is by looking at the evidence and looking at the stories, some of the stories I talked about tonight.

As members of this House know, one of the ways we promoted Bill 40 was that I jumped on my bike and I rode from Ottawa to Toronto with my good friend John Purkis and a fantastic team, some of whom are here tonight: Sharon Lee is right over there; Ethan Smith-Johnson, Erica Braunovan, Ty Coulter. Bless you all for supporting that ride. We met people along the way in communities large and small, communities represented by every political party in this House, and we kept hearing, "Joel, enough talk. It's time for action."

Let's pass Bill 40. Let's make tonight a historic opportunity. Let's send this to committee and fix whatever needs to be fixed. Let's keep Ontario safe.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'd like to start by thanking the member from Ottawa Centre for his great work in terms of his effort that he put into putting this bill together and gathering all of the evidence and facts. I'd also like to welcome Peggy Hawthorn and her friends. Thank you for joining us here tonight on one of our unique nights of night sittings.

Back to the bill, Speaker: I once again would like to thank the member for the great input that he's put. That is something that we share. Like he said, this is a non-partisan issue. This is an Ontarian issue, and for this we're all united. There's no "us" or "you." We're together. It's a "we." I'd love to work together with you as we move forward to make our roads safer, because Ontario has some of the safest roads in North America. We rank in the top five, and we're continuously improving and we're continuously working on that by introducing new legislation, such as the MOMS Act that we introduced just a short while ago.

Keeping Ontarians safe is a top priority for us here at the Ministry of Transportation, and on this specific issue, we are open to working with all members in this House to ensure that we maintain that and have some of the safest roads not only in North America, but around the world. We're focused on making sure we have the highest safety standards. For the past 24 years, our province ranked among the top five jurisdictions, like I just mentioned, in North America, and we have some of the lowest fatality rates per 10,000 licensed drivers throughout North America. We prioritize the well-being of pedestrians and cyclists by cracking down on impaired driving, distracted driving and careless driving with penalties designed to keep all road users out of harm's way.

We continually strive to make our roads even safer. That's why when we passed the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act—also known as the MOMS Act—in 2021, we introduced new rules and penalties aimed at protecting all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists. This legislation will help keep Ontario among the safest jurisdictions in North America by targeting street racing, stunt driving and other forms of aggressive and unsafe driving.

Everybody here, I believe, is in unanimous consent that when unfortunate situations unfold like the member discussed, the harshest penalties need to be given, but at the same time, each case is dealt with on an individual basis by our court system and our legal system based on what happened to that particular individual.

A driver's impatience should never put any road user at risk. That's why the MOMS Act introduced an automated camera enforcement framework designed to protect passengers who are boarding or exiting a streetcar. This framework also allows for photo evidence of vehicles that illegally pass streetcars, either by passing on the left or into oncoming traffic or passing on the right when passengers are boarding or disembarking. This represents a significant victory for road safety. Any driver who considers passing a streetcar illegally will now think twice knowing that they could be caught on camera.

The MOMS Act also introduced new measures to keep cyclists safe by changing how the province collects collision data. We now have data on a number of collisions involving car doors hitting bicycles and e-scooters. We can use that data to develop better insights, inform policy decisions aimed at protecting all road users from drivers who don't look before opening their doors, helping make our roadways safer for anyone who gets around on two wheels.

Stunt driving has absolutely no place in our roads and the MOMS Act introduced stricter penalties for anyone who puts road users at risk by behaving recklessly behind the wheel. Drivers caught street racing now face roadside license suspensions of 30 days which used to be just seven days. Their vehicles are now impounded for 14 days instead of seven days. If you're convicted of stunt driving, you will now have your license suspended for at least one year, up to a maximum of three years. Two-time offenders are subject to minimum three-year suspensions, up to a

maximum of 10 years. Subsequent offences are met with a lifetime driving suspension. Also, we lowered the threshold for stunt driving on streets with a speed limit less than 80 kilometres per hour. That way the act moves quicker and puts those high-risk drivers on that suspension. And we expanded the province's stunt driving penalty regime to off-road areas such as parking lots, bike paths and trails. The government of Ontario takes the safety of all road users extremely seriously. That's why we're cracking down on anyone who engages in unsafe, high-risk driving. By taking a tough stance against stunt drivers, we're demonstrating our commitment to protecting the people of Ontario and keeping our province amongst the safest jurisdictions in North America.

Protecting workers near our highways is a priority for our government, and that's why we gave MTO enforcement officers the authority to close roads and direct traffic when they're responding to emergencies and collision investigations. The MOMS act permits the use of an automated flagger assistant device in construction zones. These devices reduce the need for construction workers to physically stop traffic themselves, helping them out of harm's way on our highways.

We're also holding commercial drivers to stringent safety standards. The MOMS Act introduced regulatory amendments to crack down on drivers who violate hours of service. Police and the Ministry of Transportation enforcement officers can now issue out-of-service notices when a commercial vehicle driver extends their hours of service. These notices prohibit drivers from driving a commercial vehicle for a prescribed period of time. Both the driver of the vehicle and the commercial operator are legally obligated to comply with the terms of the out-of-service notice. This acts as a strong deterrent to any commercial vehicle operator that places unreasonable demands on drivers and helps keep our roadways that much safer.

We're proud of our track record of protecting all road users, but we'll never relent in our efforts to make our roadways safer. We thank the opposition to their commitment to road safety. We're always looking for ways to improve. We'll continue to work with our stakeholders and members of the opposition to keep our roads safe. The Ministry of Transportation is currently reviewing the content of Bill 40, the passage of which will be determined by all our members in the Legislature. And at the end of the day, road safety is not a partisan issue. Our government will remain fully committed to ensuring Ontario remains a world leader in road safety.

Furthermore, like I mentioned in the beginning, we're going to continue to work together with the member from Ottawa Centre and all members in this House who are interested, and continue to work with all of our stakeholder partners across the province to maintain those safer roads here in Ontario. We're also going to be introducing an act in the short future that will be taking a look at a lot of the things that are being looked at in Bill 40, as well as taking a look at the larger scope of things that we would also like to include in a better-road-safety bill.

When we take a look at the act as it's written, the one thing that I take a look at and sometimes feel it may have an adverse effect to the goal that we're collectively trying to achieve is when we talk about defining "vulnerable road users." If we define those vulnerable road users in that particular act and then hand that off to the justice system, that creates a blanket for all of those incidents that have been created for those particular people.

1820

Currently, as of today, vulnerable road users are still respected when the court systems take their case. Judges make those decisions based on their unique incidents and then reflect upon that particular piece. We don't want to take that away from the judges, when it comes to them making their decisions on an individualized case-by-case basis.

Our government has continuously committed to making sure that we have the safest roads. I just mentioned, in just a brief highlight, all of the great things that we did in the MOMS Act and we're going to build upon that like we always do.

In this particular issue, every idea that we generate as a House—it doesn't matter which way that idea comes from—will definitely be considered. I'll definitely connect with you outside of the House as well, to take a lot of your ideas and input on how we can develop that in our next ministry bill coming forward. We've been taking a look at a lot of this. You mentioned some of the reports that we did as a ministry, and that's exactly why we have those reports and that's why we go through those incidents, as to how we continuously remain among the safest roads in the world, frankly. When we take a look at Ontario's place, we are a leader when it comes to road safety.

When we talk of road safety, there's multiple parts to it, Speaker. I can even speak to some of the things that we do to ensure that our roads are safe for the drivers to even drive on. When we take a look at our winter practices, we're also leaders in North America and Canada when it comes to clearing our roads in a timely manner, and that's what we're going to continue to do under this Premier's leadership and under the leadership of the Minister of Transportation. We're going to continue to take the feedback that you're giving and implement it in a meaningful way. I know, with the MOMS Act, it was taken very, very well. If we take a look at the statistics from before the MOMS Act was introduced to what it is now, you'll be able to see the amount of change that has happened with the introduction of that particular legislation.

So, we're going to continue to build upon our legacy of having the safest roads in Ontario and continue to work with all members of this House to ensure that we do that. Again, I thank my friends that have come down all the way from, I believe you said, Wasaga Beach to come visit us here today and talk about this important issue. I value the fact that you came down here to listen to this particular debate, and I value the amount of emotions and efforts that your family must have gone through, your friends must have gone through, to bring you to this point, that you want

to advocate for your community. Those are the same values that we all hold as your members of provincial Parliament to ensure that we're doing the best that we can for all Ontario residents, and that's what we intend to do, like I mentioned, under the leadership of our Premier.

Every idea that we bring forward, when it comes to supporting road safety and making sure people are taken care of—I know the Premier supports it. I know our caucus supports it. I know our team supports it. That's what we want to do collectively, is continue to maintain that standard, and continue to be not only maintaining that standard, but continue to be a leader in North America and around the world of ensuring that we do have those safe road practices. That's why we take this so seriously. Like I said, in the MOMS Act, there's a lot of things that we introduced, but we knew when we introduced that act that even though we continuously try to strive to improve, we can always do more.

So, on this particular stance, like I mentioned a little bit ago, when we introduce new legislation, we'll be taking into account some of the items that you've discussed here in Bill 40. We'll be reviewing Bill 40 as a ministry and trying to pull out all the good ideas that we can from there, adding some of our own ideas as well. We have a broader scope of things that we want to add and specific items that we're currently working on to continue maintaining that road safety, to continue making sure that Ontarians move safely when they're on the roads.

My heart goes out to all the people that were involved in these tragic accidents, where they're no longer able to function in their day-to-day lives the way they used to. It's an absolute tragedy when that happens to somebody. That's happened to a few of my loved ones as well, and I really understand the toll and the emotional pain that goes through a family when these unfortunate incidents happen. Like I said earlier, I will definitely be working with you, for the member of Ottawa Centre, and any other members of this House that would like to join in on that conversation. Collectively, we'll continue to make our roads safer, stronger and strive to be some of the best in Ontario and the world.

And with that, Speaker, I'd like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Ms. Doly Begum: Speaker, I stand on behalf of the good people of Scarborough Southwest as well as many across the province, especially the many families that I've spoken with who have suffered or have family members who have been impacted by unsafe roads.

I'm proud to be joined by advocates and friends here in the gallery today. We've introduced them, and I know how many years and how difficult that the advocacy work has been calling on the government to pass Bill 40, Moving Ontarians Safely Act. I want to thank them once again for the work they have been doing—so much gratitude and love for the work you do. It is painstaking, it is difficult, and you're taking a lot of grief with you. I thank you for that as well. As a family member who has suffered from that, I know how tough that is.

Speaker, I'm honoured as well to stand alongside my colleagues MPP Joel Harden from Ottawa Centre as well as the MPP from University–Rosedale and the MPP from Parkdale–High Park to bring this bill forward. MPP Harden from Ottawa Centre—his leadership on this bill has been remarkable, I have to say. Not only throughout the process when he worked on this legislation, but going from different communities from Ottawa, throughout different communities, different party lines, and through Scarborough, listening to communities, and listening to their concerns—his dedication to making vulnerable road users safe. It is truly outstanding, and I want to thank him for that work that he has truly done.

Speaker, this morning we heard from family members and community members across Ontario who have first-hand experience of the profound impact of unsafe roads. We heard from community members who lost loved ones by negligent drivers who should not have been driving, who should not have been behind the wheels in the first place, who were impaired, reckless and yet got themselves a free pass or a fine to get back on the road.

The Moving Ontarians Safely Act is a crucial step in addressing the issues of road safety. If passed, this act would bring in tougher penalties for negligent, reckless drivers who injure or kill a pedestrian, first responder, cyclist or road worker while breaking the rules on the road. These tougher penalties include: being required to listen to a victim impact statement, license suspension, taking a driver re-education course—one that would have been so helpful for so many drivers who get back on the road without understanding what they did wrong—and community service on road safety. So these are actually some things that would actually make our road safer for drivers as well.

For far too long, my community in Scarborough has borne witness to the heartbreaking toll of lives lost on our local roads. Families in our communities have suffered. I wasn't going to say this in my notes, but—after listening to the Conservative member—I have to say, Speaker, that while our roads may be safer in the ranking of other unsafe roads, if I look at the data in Scarborough, our roads are not safe. When I have advocates sitting here who have in the lost loved ones, who have severe injuries, that means that we have done something wrong and we have to fix those.

Just this year, so far in 2023, in Scarborough alone there have been 10 deaths and 33 injuries as a result of unsafe roads. These deaths and injuries included infants and seniors, as well. We heard from the member from Ottawa Centre talk about a senior who just went for a morning walk, just like he does every morning.

In fact, multiple intersections in Scarborough South-west are known—famously known, for having recurring collisions, pedestrian impacts and devastating fatalities. Members of our community deserve to be able to walk, go to school, work, wait for the bus or ride a bike safely without the fear of imminent danger. Just where I live, right next door to me, a dad who lost his daughter—there is a flower that's there on a pole, actually, where you cross

in front of a seniors residence, a seniors palliative care home. I cannot tell you—there's real work that needs to be done. So yes, the MOMS Act was important, but we have to do more. It also means making roads safer for everyone, including safe drivers, so that they go through the re-education program and they understand what they have done through listening to victim statements.

Last month marked three years since the tragic death of 17-year-old Nadia Mozumder. I shared Nadia's story: a bright young woman who was struck by a vehicle while crossing the road on a green light in front of her high school. Nadia was an ambitious young woman who was passionate about contributing to her community. She had big dreams and a future that she could have helped her family and neighbours. Those who knew Nadia saw her potential, and losing her was heartbreaking. That accident was preventable. If we really looked at road safety like the way we should, we could have saved Nadia.

1830

Speaker, a negligent driver who kills or seriously injures pedestrians is often charged with careless driving and gets to walk away with small fines. This is what is currently mandated under the Highway Traffic Act. It's an insult to families who have lost their loved ones to these accidents or who end up in lifelong injury. To those, the death of their loved ones is not considered a serious enough issue by our government to warrant anything beyond a few hundred dollars. That charge is unacceptable.

Not only are we allowing these drivers to get away without real consequences, Speaker, but also without the necessary re-education. Families and friends of victims want to see meaningful consequences that ensure responsibility and accountability for drivers who share the road with vulnerable road users.

So, today, I call on all my colleagues across the aisle to commit to concrete policies to ensure that we can make our roads safe so that we don't lose any more lives—because when we lose one life, when we injure one life, then our roads are not safe. We have work to do. Let's come together and pass Bill 40. This is the fourth time we're introducing it. I hope everyone will come together and get it through this time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: When I came into Queen's Park this morning knowing that Bill 40, Moving Ontarians Safely Act, was going to be debated for second reading, I came prepared, and I knew what I was going to say. And then the day started with a press conference with advocates and stakeholders here today. One of the speakers at the press conference was Jessica Spieker, and her speech moved me deeply.

I've heard Jessica speak before and share her story. Every time she shares a story, I'm moved to tears. So I feel very strongly that her story and her speech need to be shared on the floor of this House, that members from all parties hear it, that it be part of the record in Hansard—and to share her story in her own words as to why this

legislation is so important that it pass. So, I'm going to read it. This is how it goes:

"My name is Jessica Spieker and I'm here on behalf of Friends and Families for Safe Streets, to express our full support for Bill 40, the Moving Ontarians Safely Act. This bill closes the gaps in the Highway Traffic Act which currently allow reckless, at-fault drivers who kill or seriously injure a person outside of their car by hitting them, to get away with the sole penalty being a trivial fine.

"I found out about those gaps the hard way in 2015, when I was T-boned on my bike by a woman making a left turn. She slammed her nearly 5,000-lb SUV like a battering ram into me and broke my spine, inflicted a traumatic brain injury, and caused so much soft tissue damage that I nearly died a second time because of blood-clot-related complications.

"It always surprises Ontarians to find out that hitting someone with a car is not actually illegal, in and of itself. Therefore when a reckless driver kills or injures another person, police turn to minor charges like 'turn not in safety,' 'fail to yield,' or 'unsafe start from stop,' all of which carry negligible fines, and few if any demerit points.

"In the end, the woman who nearly killed me pled down to the most trivial Highway Traffic Act infraction, 'improper use of a turn signal,' and fined \$300 and zero demerit points. Most hurtful and baffling of all, she got to continue driving as if she did nothing wrong, with no mechanism whatsoever in place to force her to become a safe driver.

"The lack of justice is maddening for me, but it's infinitely worse for families when their loved one is" so "violently and preventably killed. The system reduces our worth as human beings to a few hundred dollars, or nothing at all. An important component of healing after trauma is a societal recognition that what happened to us was wrong, as well as meaningful change in the aftermath. Nearly all victims of road violence are denied this level of justice and healing. It's intolerable, and it's time to fix our laws.

"With the Moving Ontarians Safely Act in place, every at-fault driver's license would be suspended until they appear in traffic court to face their devastated victims, until they complete community service, and until they complete remedial driver re-training. Why should a driver who killed someone be getting behind the wheel again, until they can demonstrate that they can drive safely?

"Sunday is the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, a worldwide event recognized by the UN. This week is the perfect opportunity for MPPs of all parties to honour the lives of all people who have been preventably killed on Ontario's roads by supporting road safety, by showing they have the political will to do everything possible to end the public health crisis that relentlessly steals hundreds of lives across this province, with unknown thousands of victims suffering life-ruining injuries every year, year after year after year.

"People are dying, and something effective can be done. We need this protection for people outside of cars, and we need it now."

That is Jessica's speech that she shared. I want to remind all members of this House that Jessica's story, sadly, is barely unique. There are so many across this province. That's the very real human impact of our current laws. We can do better. We must do better. I urge all members to support this bill.

Finally, Speaker, I want to acknowledge the many people and groups who have been fighting the good fight for a decade now—very quickly, in 30 seconds. We have Good Roads. We have Peggy Hawthorn here, president of United Senior Citizens, one of the biggest seniors' groups in Ontario. We have support from Marvin Macaraig of Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services. We have many, many groups like Friends and Family for Safe Streets, the Toronto Community Bike-ways Coalition, Ontario Cycling, Advocacy for Respect for Cyclists, Cycle Toronto, Walk TO, Patrick Brown and Melissa Dowrie from Bike Law. I see Janice, and Bikeways Toronto—Robert Zaichkowski, my former constituent.

There are so many people who are fighting and have been fighting this for 10 years. Let's not delay action on this any further. Let's get it passed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Blais: It's a pleasure to be here this evening to debate this important private member's bill. I'd like to thank my colleague from Ottawa Centre, my hometown, for bringing it forward, and I'd like to thank everyone joining us here this evening for your advocacy on important road safety issues.

Shortly before being elected to this place, Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity for about a year to be the chair of the transportation committee at the city of Ottawa. In addition to helping manage the day-to-day issues of that particular part of the city, the major piece of policy work that we worked on for that year was an update to the city of Ottawa's road safety action plan. This was the city of Ottawa's Vision Zero plan, and we called that plan Think Safety, Act Safely.

When I was elected to the Legislature, after having spent a year working on this plan and introducing it only about two or three months before I got elected, I was interested in following up on the aspects of road safety, the aspects of Vision Zero that fall to the provincial government, because a critical part of Vision Zero is that all orders of government need to work collaboratively together to achieve the ultimate goal of, hopefully, zero road deaths.

When I arrived here, I was a little shocked, to tell you the truth, that the province of Ontario, the largest province in the country, one of the largest jurisdictions in North America, did not have its own Vision Zero plan. For a province of—what is it?—15 million or 16 million people, the vast majority of those with a driver's licence and having an opportunity to drive on a fairly regular, if not daily, basis, the province did not have a Vision Zero plan.

And so, Madam Speaker, any measures that can be brought forward to help improve the safety of road users,

whether that be a pedestrian who's walking down the street, whether that be a cyclist who's riding to work or to the grocery, whether that be people in their cars driving. Anything that we can do to help improve safety for all road users is something that we need to be focused on and something that we need to have attention to.

1840

Now, we fully support this particular effort to ensure that drivers who injure or kill those other road users while committing some other road violation are held accountable. I would ask the member to consider one potential change, either for committee or perhaps a future iteration of the bill, should that be necessary. I don't understand the carve-out for motorized bicycles or even any bicycle. I think if you are negligent of the road laws, if you run a red light or you make an illegal turn or if you're distracted and you hurt or kill someone, I don't think the form of vehicle you're in should really matter. Most road injuries and road deaths occur, yes, generally a car with a person or a cyclist. The person in the car is of that situation going to be the most safe, but there are instances of cyclists injuring pedestrians. We see it in Toronto, especially those motorized bicycles and all the deliveries that we have for food service. If those hit you while you're walking down the sidewalk, I think you would feel some pain and possibly die. And we know that there's a lot of them. So just something for the member to consider if we need do need to come to future iterations.

I know the member is an avid cyclist himself, and I've taken up cycling recently. I know he biked here all the way from Ottawa one weekend, I suppose. I hope it took more than a day. Just before I end, and only because I want to get it on the record, he and I share a segment on Strava. We've both done one segment together on Strava and I was very happy to see that I surpassed his time by two seconds earlier this year. So when the member is back in Orléans again next summer, perhaps we can have a little race down Decoeur Drive, in a very safe way, to see who it is.

We'll happily support the bill this evening and look forward to working with the member and with the government to continue to improve road safety.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from Ottawa Centre for his two-minute response.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank all those who spoke to the bill. I want to thank the member from Brampton East, I want to thank the member from Orléans, the member from Scarborough Southwest and the member for Parkdale–High Park. I want to end on this note, Speaker, because my friends in government are still keeping me in suspense. And that's okay. Suspense is a good thing to have in life, I suppose. My friend from Brampton East said that Ontario has some of the most safe roads in the world and I think that only works if you set the target in the wrong place for the policy.

My friend from Orléans just said that the city of Ottawa—and I should have mentioned this in my 12 minutes—set the target of Vision Zero. The city of Toronto has done the same thing. Communities from all over this

province have done the same thing. And I would tell the member from Brampton East, I would tell the government that the purpose of Bill 40 and why I hope it will pass tonight and set a major precedent in whatever comes after, whatever gets called to committee, whatever gets put tangibly to people to address the dangerous situation we have all over Ontario—we have to set a target of saying no one gets hurt, no one gets killed.

We can't be satisfied with 466 pedestrians last year, subsequent to the MOMS act being passed, being critically injured or killed. We cannot be satisfied with 135 cyclists being critically, catastrophically injured or killed. That is not satisfactory, I want to believe, for this House. So what Bill 40 presents us is an opportunity to agree that 10 years of research has been done on this, that we can pass this today, sent it to committee, make whatever improvements need to be made. Maybe the government comes forward with a bill in the new year that is even better—fantastic—but please send a message to Ontarians tonight that Bill 40 matters to you. Because that's what I've been hearing from all over Ontario, all kinds of communities: They want Bill 40 passed tonight.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The time provided for our private members' public business has now expired.

Mr. Harden has moved second reading of Bill 40, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to provide for consequences to those who cause injury or death to certain road users. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAXATION

Resuming the debate adjourned November 16, 2023, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion moved by Mr. Blais without notice regarding HST on home heating fuels.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

MPP Jamie West: I had begun this afternoon, and I don't know if I'll be able to improve on that.

Mr. John Vanthof: We are in favour of removing the HST on home heating fuels.

MPP Jamie West: Yes, absolutely, we're in favour of removing HST from home heating. Our House leader talked about it earlier this afternoon during the lunch hour, how it was important to remove the HST.

One of the things that is happening, though, is that there's a lot of conversation about affordability in the last

little while, and in the conversation about affordability, I think what's being left behind is that there is more to why people are struggling than these issues about writing a letter or moving things forward. People are struggling in the province because of gouging, for example. Where I live, you can drive within an hour or 45 minutes, and the price of gas changes five, 10 cents. And it feels unusual, because what we're told is, "Well, that's transportation. It costs transportation because you're going to drive this much further." But I can also buy milk in those areas, and milk is a liquid that's transported, and it doesn't change by five or 10 cents depending on where you're going; it's a standard price. So, in northern Ontario, you feel gouged.

I know the government has removed the tax from the price of gas, but we're also seeing that these gas companies are making record profits, and so it feels that what the government is trying to do by helping people keep more money in their pockets, the gas company sees it and says, "Well, we're already billionaires, but let's just raise it a little more because the market can bear it." And in places like northern Ontario, where you have good mining jobs and things like that, the market can bear a lot, Speaker, as you know. If you have to get from Capreol to Garson mine, there's no bus. You're going to drive, and you're going to fill up your truck because the roads in northern Ontario kind of require you to have something with some clearance. We don't get a lot of Lamborghinis out there.

So, we have to be frank about—there is more than this one silver bullet bogeyman thing to recognize, and that is the fact that there is gouging on it. We see it at the grocery store. I've talked about this before: No one can convince me at the grocery store that they are not just raising prices because they can. There is some inflation cost, there are some other factors. We saw this in the past where there was the beef scandal in Alberta. We saw it in the past when there was bad growth of lettuce and different prices going up. But across the board, prices are jumping up, and we know that CEOs are telling their shareholders, "We made record profits because we raised prices." So, it's not even that they're hiding it; they're just doing it. These are things that we should be addressing at a provincial level. These are things we should be calling out, all of us around the room, because we're feeling it too when we go shopping.

Now, when it comes to home heating, in northern Ontario, you have oil, electric, wood, gas. A lot of people have wood because everything has become so expensive. My first home was a little small house my wife and I had, and then we were able to upgrade when my daughter was born to one that allowed all of the kids to have their own bedroom. But my first home was all electric heating with a natural gas fireplace in the basement.

1850

Electric heat became so expensive that we basically left all the doors open and only used the fireplace, because we just didn't have the kind of money to have electric heat. We saw this when the Liberal government had failed with the sell-off of Hydro One and the price of heat going up, right—the phrase of "heat versus eat." That was a real reality for a lot of people with electricity prices climbing.

But I think right now what we're doing is we're pretending that that was all taken care of and addressed because we got rid of the \$7-million man or whatever his name was. There was this CEO that got removed from Hydro One, but the price of electricity is still climbing. My in-laws, for example, they know exactly what time the price variables are, because their budget is tight. If they're going to do laundry, if they're going to run the dishwasher, if they're going to use anything that uses some electricity, they wait until the prices go down. They can't afford not to. But a lot of people can't afford to wait. A lot of people can only do laundry—if you've got a handful of kids and you have a full-time job, there's only certain times you can do the laundry. You're boss typically won't let you zip home and turn on the dryer if you're on shift work. So you don't have that comfort level.

It's important to recognize that electricity continues to climb, and people see it in their bill. I know that there are some efforts to provide relief to consumers. The Liberals did the first time—basically, "The government is paying part of this portion"—and the Conservatives are doing the same thing; they're paying part of the portion. But that's not a long-term solution to this. We really got to focus on how we bring these rates down.

With wood—I had a good conversation with the member from Sault Ste. Marie, because he was talking about the cost of buying wood. I said you can't be from northern Ontario if you're buying wood. The member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay and I had this conversation one day for about 20 minutes about different types of wood, and how maple is easier to stack, and how pine is harder to pull apart when you're splitting it. The member for Oshawa said, "That's the most northern Ontario conversation I have ever heard."

Interjection.

MPP Jamie West: So he does. He just was buying some wood because he recently got a bigger woodshed and was trying to fill it in and wanted to make sure he has some dry wood before that happened. So we had a great conversation about heating with wood. It is one of the things that I enjoy doing. I love splitting firewood. It's a fun way to pass the time. It's rewarding.

If are you in northern Ontario, you typically have trees that are in precarious locations. They're going to fall on the road or fall on your camp. You've got to take them down anyways. It's a good way to spend time with your son and your father-in-law. Try to convince your father-in-law to wear chainsaw pants: It is exciting time.

But one of the reasons a lot of people heat with wood is because of the cost. It is really, really expensive to heat in the winter, and it is really cold in northern Ontario—not just as a cliché.

Interjection.

MPP Jamie West: That's right. Big hearts were very warm, but the weather is cold. So if you can offset that bill by basically paying from the sweat of your brow to heat with wood, you absolutely do. And there are a lot of people who depend on how much wood they can split, so if there's an injury or as they get older and their back becomes sore

and they're not able to do as much, it becomes this real challenge of how to make ends meet.

Then gas and oil, as they come along—growing up, we heated with oil, and I remember things being really tight, and in the springtime, having to order—not exactly a cup of oil, but trying to do the math on how much oil you could afford just to get enough heat, because you knew the weather was warming up. This is what's happening to people, especially seniors on fixed incomes and especially people who are minimum wage workers, and more and more people who are seeing the gouging at the gas pumps, the gouging in the grocery stores, having a hard time making ends meet and trying to figure out how to stretch their budget as much as they can. More and more with gas, I have constituents—and I'm sure my colleagues have the same thing—with gas heat, wondering, “Why does this delivery fee keep climbing? Why am I paying more for delivery than for gas?” They can't wrap their head around it, and it feels unfair. It does feel unfair.

But going back to the amendment about removing HST on home heating, this is absolutely what we support. It's not new to us. We've supported this in the past, and we think it's important to do, because we recognize that. But I think there are things that we can do as well to help people. The colleague from Toronto—Danforth has really taught me a lot about heat pumps. I have heard about them, but I didn't know very much about them, and so I was able to learn more about them. And I believe it's in New Brunswick, or I know it's in the Maritimes, that the government has a program where you could get a heat pump very easily. I think they might be even giving them away, but if they're not, it's an incredible rebate to get them so that you can transition over so that your heating costs can go down. And when I talk to people—because there are some people in my city who have these already—it's an amazing thing where they will have their furnace in place, but they also have the heat pump. It offsets—it almost seems like a work of fiction when someone explains it to you, because it helps heat your house in the winter, it helps keep your house cool in the summer and the cost is negligible.

My son has a hybrid car, and he just paid it off. He's had it for about five years, and he was the first in our family to own a hybrid car; it's relatively new out of my friends. And my father-in-law, every single time he goes to camp, because he drives there and then charges at camp, keeps asking me how much it costs to charge it. I said, “You don't even notice it on the bill, to be honest. It's hard to factor it.” And he's gone online to look for stuff, and he just can't believe that it's not roughly the same as gasoline to drive a hybrid, to run an electric vehicle. And so, bringing back the incentives—because my son was a student when he bought his car, so he didn't have a ton of money, and honestly, I don't have enough money to help out with this kind of stuff, right? I have three kids going to school, and I'm lucky we're buying groceries. But if we're able to provide people with heat pumps, that puts more money in their pocket, if we're able to help with those incentives.

My son is bigger than I am. He's 6 foot 4; he's a large guy. And the only reason we got into a Prius Prime is because the car dealer was helping another client and we thought it would be a funny photo to have the two of us crammed in this car. It's incredibly roomy. And then we took it for a drive, and my son, who is into instrumentation and all these different things—you know the younger generation—loved all the bells and whistles of this thing. And I've got to tell you, I am jealous over the last five years of watching him fill up for gas literally once a month—and if he isn't leaving the city, it can go longer. I'm worried that the gas is going to go to varnish because it takes so long before he uses it.

But there was an incentive when he bought his Prius Prime, and that's what helped him make the decision. That's what shifts things over, and that's, long term, what put more money in his pocket. Think about a student with a—not a part-time job; he's got a decent job, but he's a full-time student. His employer was nice enough to move as many hours around his schedule so he could keep his job in instrumentation while he was going to school. But to be able to make your car payments—and then once he's free and clear of the car payments—that's the best day of your life, when you don't make car payments anymore. But he's literally not paying for gas on a regular basis. The rest of us, I'm sure, at least weekly, are putting money in. And those of us—I know there are some of my colleagues—I'm fortunate in northern Ontario to have a riding where everything is about 15 minutes away, but my other colleagues in southern Ontario, more rural ridings, northern Ontario, those larger ridings, you know, you could drive eight hours within that riding. So that's a lot of money to go around. And so, these are things that I think we should be doing. These are things that are goals that we can do. The heat pumps are goals that we can do. The rebates for electric vehicles are things that we can do.

Helping people get better insulation for their windows and their doors: When I was on the executive board for the United Way, there was a program to help people with lower incomes primarily better insulate their houses. There were rebates and ways—and not to go too far in the weeds on it, but just to help people keep the heat they have in their house so they're not paying for the frosted windows because it's not insulated properly.

There was a program—when I was elected it was rolling out—where you could get rebates on windows. I remember hearing from companies who brought specialists across from other countries who had been doing this after it was cancelled and saying, “I work for these workers, but no one is buying these windows anymore because the incentive to switch to these high-energy, more efficient windows is gone.” But these are things that we can do.

1900

I know the topic of the day is electric vehicles and the mining strategy, but four and a half years ago, it was tearing down windmills, ripping up charging stations. So we're in a situation now where, as my car is looking to get replaced, I'm interested in looking at a hybrid, but I can't get an electric. I know I can't because I wouldn't be able

to drive to work. The range isn't there yet, the charging stations aren't there, and there aren't enough charging stations for my type of work. For a lot of other people who are working, it's the same situation. But it's on the horizon if we can bring back those charging stations, if we can help people be more energy-efficient, because climate change is real.

I'm very proud that in Sudbury, we have Sophia Mathur. I've talked many times here about Sophia. She was the first young individual outside of Europe to have a climate strike, and it happened in Sudbury, Ontario. That is an example of—as I often say, Sudbury is a town that punches above its weight. This young girl, who is now a teenager, started climate-striking to bring forward this thing. It has been a simple message all the way through: “Listen to the experts,” which I think is great because many of us—we're bright, all of us, as politicians. You can't get here if you're not; you need a certain level of ability. But there are people who are experts in this who can tell you.

With my background in health and safety, one of the things I learned early on is that if you talk to people who work in that field and you ask them, “What do you think should happen, and what would you do if you had a magic wand?” and those kinds of questions—“If the sky was the limit, what would you do?”—and then you figure out what the barriers are around that—hours of the day and how much money you have—you can come up with pretty good solutions.

If we listen to experts when it comes to climate change—I believe my colleagues do believe in this, but there are some people, I think, who think it's natural. We have to remind ourselves that last spring you could smell smoke everywhere. We hosted the Council of State Governments East conference, an eastern conference, here in Toronto, and my colleagues from the States were telling me that our smoke was affecting them in eastern United States; that, if you watch the news, highways were melting in Europe; that, I think it was in Greece, they were cancelling having people go on vacation there. They were closing down tourist attractions because the heat was so high.

It's a real thing. I don't care if you believe it's man-made or don't believe it's man-made, but you've got to believe that we can do something to turn the tide to make things better, right? This is just where we are, and we can do this. What I'm saying is, we can do more than write a letter. We can do more than have a stern conversation with the federal government.

Mr. John Fraser: We could burn all the letters.

MPP Jamie West: We could burn the letters, right? That's what we've seen so far.

I heard, earlier today, one of the government members say, “We have the strongest environmental policy,” and there was some—pushback, I think, would be a polite way to say that. There was some pushback on that, because when people ask me about the environmental policy, the only thing I can really think of is there was a litter cleanup day. It was great. I have pictures of me when I was in Cubs

at litter cleanup day, so it doesn't feel like a new idea. It feels like a relatively old idea.

Look, sending a letter to the federal government will sound good. People will think, “Oh, that's good. You're taking action.” But it's not real action. Putting stickers on gas pumps isn't really taking action. It is telling people that something bad is going to happen. By focusing on things like this, you're missing the mark. When you're telling people, “We care about your affordability issues, but also we're going to give \$650 million to build a luxury spa,” I don't think those two things align. They're just off somehow.

Let's go back to helping people. Let's go back to talking about how we really could remove HST from home heating. People would see that as a positive thing. I think that we could do more than that. I have been thinking a lot about debate and debate being a “Yes, and” conversation, because we've become adversarial. Sometimes, honestly, some bills are just nonsense. But a lot of times, we can improve them. That's the purpose. We go to committee; we improve them. In debate, we talk about, “How do we improve?”

I think we can write a letter and say, “Hey, we should do this”—whatever letter you want to write. But at the end of the day, all that is, is a letter. We're basically going on bended knee and saying, “Please, please, can you guys do this?” But there is stuff we can do here. We have some authority and power in here as elected officials at a provincial level. We can provide those rebates to people for electric vehicles and hybrid vehicles. We can provide rebates for insulation and better windows. We can provide incentives for charging stations. We can help people put charging stations into their houses so you don't have to trickle-charge with your regular 120-volt plug outside the house. We can get into the heat pump business and give them away—just give them away—because of the return on investment.

That's where we need to go. But 100%, I think, from 2009 to today, we have always been about returning the HST on heating forms.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Hon. Paul Calandra: It is always a pleasure to be able to rise today to speak to the motion that—as you know, Madam Speaker, we put the motion on the table earlier, and the Liberals voted against the very same motion. We also asked them a little bit earlier on if they would be willing to join with us in calling the federal finance minister to ask her if she could include a removal of HST from home heating oils in this Thursday's economic statement. Unfortunately, they didn't take us up on that.

But I want to talk a little about the motion as it is. As you know, Madam Speaker, the motion was amended. There were two amendments. The first amendment was because the Liberals forgot to add the word “Ontario.” So the Ontario Liberal Party brings a motion to the table and forget to add the word “Ontario” to the motion. This is the party we're dealing with. A major motion that we have been bringing forward in this place to help the people of

the province of Ontario—they have consistently voted against those measures, as colleagues will know. They are actually the party that brought forward a carbon tax. They're the party that brought forward, also, the cap-and-trade. Now, we've heard from the NDP that cap-and-trade, in a made-up world, doesn't cost people anything. Having said that, the motion that was brought forward by the Liberals forgot to add the word "Ontario," and then there was a subsequent motion that—they had to amend it again, because they had made a mistake not only once, but twice. They had made a mistake not once, but twice. They forgot to add the word "families" to the motion, right? So the imaginary motion that the Liberals put forward forgot to add "Ontario" and then forgot to add "families," and this is what the people of the province of Ontario are dealing with.

I'll speak to the amended motion, which is "families," because I think that is in the spirit. We heard the member for Orléans earlier today. He was on his feet constantly, asking us to speak to the amendments, and we're going to speak to the amendments—"families"—because that is what the Liberals have done. It's about what the Liberals have done to families, how they have hurt families throughout their existence, really, frankly, as a party.

Let's talk about families and why we, on this side of the House, are so—and to their credit, the NDP are also in favour of killing the carbon tax on home heating oil. My friends and colleagues in the NDP were also in favour of killing the carbon tax on groceries.

The Liberals, Madam Speaker, as you know, voted to keep a carbon tax on groceries. The Liberals, as you know, refused unanimous consent to kill the carbon tax on home heating oil. They also voted against a unanimous consent motion earlier today to remove the HST on home heating oil, so we have a double whammy here. We said we wanted to remove it, both the HST and the carbon tax on home heating oil and fuels—all fuels—and they voted against that. They stopped unanimous consent.

Now, the NDP and the Progressive Conservatives joined forces to try to put more money back in the pockets of the people of Ontario. It was a historic day.

Interjection.

Hon. Paul Calandra: And the member for Toronto–Danforth's clearing his throat, because it is not something that happens often, where the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP join together to put more money back into the pockets of the people of the province of Ontario. But today, there is a recognition that a carbon tax and that the HST on home heating is very, very expensive and it costs people a lot of money.

1910

And it's not just on that. Remember last night, the member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington was talking about—just to stray for a second—the carbon tax on growers in his community? I think it was like \$17,000 or \$18,000 a month on family-owned businesses in that community, who hire people, who have people working for them—and each and every month, \$15,000 goes towards a carbon tax.

But let's talk about what the carbon tax does. So when you open up your bill, not only is there a carbon tax on the heating, on the oil or the gas or the electricity. If you have electricity, if you're heating by propane, there is a carbon tax on that. And of course, there is a significant HST on that. We have been fighting to remove that since we've been in office. We went to court. We went to court to stop this from happening, Madam Speaker, as you know.

At one point, it was the NDP and the Liberals working together to try and stop us from doing this, but the NDP, as I said, have come around and have decided that it is an important measure of affordability that we can do for the people of Ontario at this time. The Liberals, in their wisdom—or lack thereof, Madam Speaker—have doubled down and decided that we have to move forward.

As I said earlier, we have the unique situation right now where the federal Liberal Minister of the Environment, is challenging his Prime Minister, Liberal Prime Minister Trudeau. He has said if there are any carve-outs at all on the carbon tax, that it will be under a different Minister of the Environment—essentially challenging the Prime Minister, saying that if he changes the carbon tax, he will quit. He will quit and it will be under somebody else's watch.

So, Madam Speaker, what I'm saying to the Liberals here is that, given that there will not be a carve-out on carbon tax, because the Liberals in Ottawa have said the carbon tax will not come off home heating fuel—they've been very clear; they will not take it off home heating fuel. That means Ontarians and all Canadians—except if you're in Atlantic Canada, because in Atlantic Canada, where there are Liberals and they want to retain their seats, they're going to give them that credit. As the member for Essex said yesterday, it's to subsidize dirty oil from overseas—but that's a different story and it's a different topic. I want to continue to speak about families.

What the Liberals have said: "We're going to charge families more for their fuel. We will not remove it." So what we're doing here tonight, by the motion that was, really, brought forward by the Progressive Conservatives at the end of question period today, is giving the Liberals another opportunity. Take the HST off home heating fuels. But will they do it? I'm not sure if the federal Liberals will do that or not, Madam Speaker. I have no idea. They've resisted it each and every year that they have been in office.

They have always thought that people should pay more. Because if you pay more, if we punish Canadians—the Liberal philosophy is this, and again, I borrow from the member from Essex. He said it really well last night. If you punish Canadians, then we will punish them into doing things differently. So, it's not about rewarding Canadians for doing things differently; it's not about bringing in new technologies to help Canadians do things differently. I know the member from Sudbury talked about heat pumps, because you know, Madam Speaker, we're talking about bringing small, modular reactors, because we know the cleanest form of energy creation is, of course, our nuclear fleet. It is what has helped us reduce our greenhouse gas

emissions, which has allowed us to lead the nation, and creates thousands of jobs. But for the Liberals, it's about punishing people. If you punish taxpayers, then they will do things differently, and families certainly are doing things differently, because the punishment that they're receiving from the Liberals—the federal Liberals, supported by the Liberals here—is at an all-time high. It is at an all-time high.

It's not just a punishing carbon tax, Madam Speaker, it is out-of-control spending that accomplishes nothing. It is a government that continues to add—and we've seen the show before—red tape and duplication. Borrowing, out of control.

Now, when we said that if you do that it will create inflation, and then with inflation will come higher interest rates—you will all remember last year when the Prime Minister was asked about this and he mocked the journalist. The Prime Minister said budgets will balance themselves. He mocked a journalist when he said, "Well, what about in the future, when interest rates go up? How will the people of Canada pay for these increased interest rates?" And the Prime Minister at the time mocked the journalist for suggesting that interest rates would go up. But what have we seen? We have seen the fastest increase in interest rates ever. Last year at this time—I don't know if it was last year; maybe a little bit more—people were at, what, 2%? And the interest rates have gone up and up and up.

And what is the result of the Liberals' punishment of Canadian and Ontario families? The result of the punishment by the Liberals on Canadian families—it's a punishment on their pocket books, but it's a punishment on affordability. So now Canadians are having and Ontarians are having to make really tough, difficult decisions because of the increase in interest rates that have been brought on by the Liberals. They are having to make difficult decisions. Renewals of their mortgages are coming up, and they have gone from 2% to 7% or 8% in one year because of the punishment that the Liberals are putting on Canadian families and taxpayers. What is the answer from the Liberals? Well, there is no answer. There is no answer. It is about punishing. I'm not sure what type of punishment that is, what results the Liberals want to see in the punishment in the form of higher interest rates, but we know that Ontario families will pay the price for that punishment.

We have talked about the carbon tax consistently in this place for five years. We have said that it will not accomplish the goals that you seek it to accomplish. We've said that over and over and over again, and the message that we continuously got from the Liberals is, "Don't worry; if you pay a high tax, you'll get more back." We heard it today in question period. Ironically enough, today in question period, the Liberals, who get one question every 11 days, asked a question basically doubling down on their support for a carbon tax—not once, not twice, but three times rising in their place to defend a carbon tax, a punishing carbon tax, suggesting to all of us here and to all Ontarians that the carbon tax, despite the fact that you're paying

more, actually puts more in your pocket. That is what they're saying.

No Ontario family believes that that is actually the case. There is no family out there who is opening up a gas bill or a hydro bill—if they're heating by gas or hydro—or who is accepting a delivery of propane somewhere in the province of Ontario right now that is thinking, oh wow, this massive carbon tax and the tax on the tax—don't forget; there's also a tax on the tax. So you pay a carbon tax on the tax that you pay. That is part of the brilliance of Liberal economic strategy. There is nobody who is opening up that bill right now and is suggesting to themselves, "Oh, thank gosh—thank gosh—although I'm paying one of the highest rates for energy because of failed Liberal policies, I don't have to worry because Justin Trudeau says somehow there's going to be more." When the person pays it out of the one pocket, and he or she goes in the other pocket and there's nothing there, they're not saying, "Oh, thank goodness. I've got Justin Trudeau to thank for having no money. I've got Justin Trudeau to thank for out-of-control interest rates. I've got Justin Trudeau to thank because I have to make the decision of whether my kid can join a sport or not. But thank goodness for that increased carbon tax, because I know"—as the member for Kanata-Carleton said—"it's going to do me good. It's going to be good for me."

Speaking of families, when I was a kid, often I knew that there was something—and we all have this, right? "If you do this, it's good for you. Don't worry about it." You get sick or something, and Italians, we have remedies for everything. There's remedies and potions for everything, right? But I knew in my heart of hearts that when my mother was telling me that some potion made out of I don't know what—I knew in my heart of hearts it wasn't going to be good for me, that it wasn't probably—

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It worked.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I know the member for King-Vaughan is saying it worked. I don't know that it worked or not. Maybe the added shot of Buckley's worked, but I'm not sure that the beet root and everything else—

Hon. Stephen Lecce: And whisky.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes, when you have a toothache, here's a shot of whisky; just gargle it and you'll feel better. I'm not sure that that was good for me. Some will probably argue in this House that it's clear that some of those remedies weren't good for me.

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But I don't know any Ontarian, I don't know anybody anywhere in the country right now that is saying, "Thank goodness we got that Liberal carbon tax." There's not anybody. And you know how the picture of it is, because when the Prime Minister came out, he came out—and you remember this, right—and announced joyfully, "Hi, I'm removing the carbon tax from home heating oil in Atlantic Canada." He thought to himself, "I've got them now." And all of the people around him—real happy. They're all clapping away.

Now, forget the fact that for 10 years or however long they have foisted this misery on the people of Canada, this

has been the signature policy of the Liberal Party of Canada—the signature policy. There is no other policy that has meant more to this Prime Minister than a carbon tax—none; no other policy. Because it was going to solve, as the member for Essex said, everything, and it has accomplished nothing except impoverish Canadian and Ontario families.

But you'll remember this picture, Madam Speaker. I know that you do, because in Hamilton, I know the impact that this is having. Every single Liberal coming out there, they're clapping away. They think they have done a really good thing, and then moments later, you get the question, "Well, what about every other province? What about residents who live in"—I don't know—"Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba or Saskatchewan? What about the Northwest Territories?" "Oh, don't worry. You can buy a heat pump." Well, I'm not sure a heat pump is going to work in the Yukon. I'm not sure that a heat pump will work in the Northwest Territories. But do you know what I know? In the Northwest Territories, the cost of a carbon tax is massive. In Nunavut, it is massive. You go to one of those stores right now and you see the cost of milk in one of those stores. Not only is it expensive to bring food to the north of this country; imagine, on top of that, you then put a carbon tax on the people who are flying food to the north, in every aspect of it. Imagine this: Milk is like 20 bucks for four litres of milk, and probably more in some cases. Do they get a break? No, because, don't worry, it'll make you feel better. The Liberal carbon tax is going to make you feel better.

So, signature policy, all the Atlantic Liberals out there clapping away—they have done something really good, they think, and the rest of the country is in a rage. Because not only have their mortgages doubled, not only has their heating increased significantly, not only is the car that they drive and not only are the buses that they take more expensive—because, guess what? They also pay a carbon tax to fuel up buses, and don't forget, they eliminated the transit tax credit that was in place. They have eliminated that, but you should feel better about it because, don't worry, they have got you. They have got you covered. And how have they got you covered? With another tax that will make you feel even better. So giving more money to the Liberals is going to make you feel better.

And then they doubled down. I have never seen anything like this. I have never seen it. I've got to be honest with you, Madam Speaker. I slept in a little bit last week, was having my coffee, 11 o'clock—I'm going to be honest; I slept in. I was having a coffee. I watched the show called "question period," and there's a Liberal minister from Atlantic Canada; I don't even remember her name, I got so angry. Her response—as the member for Essex talked about and a lot of members have talked—when asked, "Well, what about the rest of the country?" her response was, "Well, I guess, if you just elected more Liberals, then you too might get that credit. You too might get more money into your pocket, but only if you elect more Liberals." Now, I don't know what that meant for the 70, 80 other Liberals who are from Ontario, the vast majority—

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Seventy-six.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's 76, I'm told. But the one that matters most is the member of Parliament right here, Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, who could have brought forward an HST removal and a carbon tax—because she is the only one that can do it. We don't have the ability to actually remove the HST on fuel. Only the federal government can do it. We can ask, but they have to do it.

Have they ever done it? No, so that is why we are leading the way as Progressive Conservatives and saying, "Remove the carbon tax. Remove the HST. Help Ontario and Canadian families. Do the right thing." But I am fully aware of the fact that—I fully doubt that they will do that, but I'm optimistic. I am optimistic.

And with that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Mr. Calandra has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This is a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1925 to 1955.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Members, please take your seats.

Mr. Calandra has moved the adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise and remain standing to be counted by the Clerks.

All those opposed to the motion, please rise and remain standing to be counted by the Clerks.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): The ayes are 42; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion carried.

Debate adjourned.

LESS RED TAPE, MORE
COMMON SENSE ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023
POUR PLUS DE BON SENS ET MOINS
DE FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 16, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to amend various Acts / *Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant diverses lois.*

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Resuming debate, I recognize the member from Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm pleased to speak to this very important bill. I have, of course, an introductory comment to make, and then I'm going to get into the meat of the bill itself. The first thing I want to do is get into the reason, or the background, of why I'm going to be commenting on this bill.

By way of background, some members of this House may recall that, prior to being elected to this Legislature, I

was a practising sole practitioner lawyer in my own hometown of Amherstburg, Ontario. It wasn't a long commute to work; as I said before, some people might remember that I'd leave my house and I'd drive to my office in Amherstburg and it was an eight-minute commute. It wasn't a long commute, but it was long enough to think. In those days, there was a Liberal government running the province of Ontario and I was running a sole practitioner law office in a small town. Periodically, the Liberal government would introduce more legislation and would introduce more regulation, and it would make it harder for me to hire an employee. It would make it harder for me to file my documents at the courthouse. It would be harder for me to get my clients' cases through the court system. Everything was getting harder and harder and harder.

As I took my eight-minute commute from my house to my law office in Amherstburg, I would say to myself, "I wonder how the Liberal government is going to make my life harder today?" And then all that changed. It changed because the government changed and we elected a new Premier, and this new Premier has a dedicated Minister of Red Tape Reduction, and 11 attempts and introductory bills have been passed in this Legislature, reducing red tape and making it easier and easier and easier to get stuff done in Ontario. And that's why these pieces of legislation are important, because if all the sole practitioner lawyers out there like myself can get stuff done faster, that means that clients get better service, not only from their lawyers but from the courthouse. Red tape reduction is an important goal, and I am proud that we have a dedicated minister for that reason. That is my introduction to this particular matter.

I know that other members have spoken to this particular bill. One member called it a long omnibus bill. It's not a long omnibus bill; it's rather a short bill. It's only barely 22 pages and most of those pages are one or two sentences, so I don't find it to be a lengthy omnibus bill. I find it to actually be a very readable document.

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Let's start with schedule 1. Schedule 1 deals with the Agricultural and Horticultural Organizations Act. That particular act, in its present form, requires these various organizations to present audited financial statements at their annual meetings. An audited financial statement is rather complex. If you're an accountant, you know right away what I'm talking about. An audited financial statement, from my perspective as a former legal professional, is a very important and legal document. It has, let's call it, a threshold of necessity way up here. It's very legal. It's got a lot of requirements. An audited financial statement is very important.

But for these organizations to continue, you don't need that level of compliance. It's not necessary. Many of these organizations are actually very small organizations in small towns where everybody knows each other by their first name and everybody knows what's going on, and they don't have a very large bank account anyway. So we're removing that very onerous requirement, and the new requirement is simply to require "prescribed financial

information," which will keep everybody in the organization properly informed and remove the very onerous requirement for what is often and frequently a very unnecessary document. That is a very practical improvement.

Let's move on now to schedule 2. Schedule 2 deals with the Algoma University Act, 2008. That act is amended to permit an exception to a certain rule, and, essentially, the upshot of it is that the person serving as the chair of the board might have their position as chair extended past a certain deadline. That's a very useful thing, too, because like I said, it's not necessary to automatically have that expire—certainly, in the case of a chair. There might be important legal consequences to that because you might have a vacant chair, and then, the consequence might be that certain business cannot be conducted. So that's a very practical amendment.

Moving on to schedule 3, the Charities Accounting Act: a certain requirement is removed. As a former practising lawyer, this makes eminent sense to me, but I'm going to try to put it in layman's terms. Essentially, as things exist now, if you are the recipient of a certain benefit—let's say it's a gift or it's a payment of money or what have you—under a certain will or testamentary document, you would have to give a certain notice to the public guardian and trustee's office. There's no reason for that, and so that is simply being removed.

There's something in schedule 4 called the Commodity Futures Act. It's reducing a notice period from 90 days to 60 days. The Commodity Futures Act applies to so remarkably few people in the province of Ontario that there are remarkably few people who need to give that type of notice or who need to participate in that particular process. So the reduction from 90 days to 60 days is a practical reduction because there's so few people involved.

Schedule 5 deals with the Corporations Act. The Corporations Act is an extremely complex act. It would be pages and pages and pages long. It has a number of requirements. One of those requirements is that a special resolution has to be passed by the corporation to authorize the continuance and that it must be approved in each class of shareholders by a separate vote—that bears some explanation.

The class of shareholders can be unlimited. Typically, classes of shareholders are broken down as follows: There is a voting class and a non-voting class. You might have voting shares in a corporation, which means you get a notice in the mail, you show up at the shareholders meeting, there's a certain proposition that's put forward that people have to vote on, the shareholders get to vote on it, and what happens? Well, if you have voting shares, you get to vote. If you have other shares that are non-voting shares, you don't get to vote. Now, somebody might say, "Well, why would you want non-voting shares? That doesn't make any sense." Somebody might say that. Some people don't want voting shares. Some people just want shares that represent a value of money. They're not concerned with the management or the day-to-day operations

of the corporation. They just want to make sure that their financial share or their financial investment is protected, and they have non-voting shares. Corporations are specifically set up that way. In this particular instance, that requirement, that is to say, a special resolution being passed by both sets of shareholders, is not necessary anymore.

I look to schedule 8 now, dealing with the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario Act, again, reducing a certain period from 90 to 60 days, and I've already dealt with that.

I want to take a particular interest in talking about schedule 10. Schedule 10 is the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act. Under the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, there's a section, and that section sets out the penalties if you're convicted of an offence. All sorts of provincial pieces of legislation have similar sections. If you're convicted of an offence, you look under this particular section, and it describes the various penalties. If you're convicted of offence number 1, you get penalty A; if you're convicted of offence number 2, you get penalty B etc. In this particular section, there's a minimum penalty of \$2,500 for certain types of offences. One of those is disobeying an order. So, for example, if you're a motor vehicle dealer and you've been given an order to comply—let's say, I don't know, you are ordered not to sell any vehicles for the next 30 days or you are ordered to deliver such and such a vehicle to an impound yard for the purpose of using it for evidence in a court case—whatever order it might be. The standing minimum fine is \$2,500. This section or this particular schedule 10 increases that fine to \$5,000.

Now, I asked another member what they thought about that. I said, "Did you think \$5,000 is too high? Do you think it's too low? Do you think it's just right?" I don't know if that member had an opinion on that. I have a particular opinion. I think minimum penalties can often be very, very important and very useful, because if it's not high enough, it's not a deterrent. So you have to set minimum penalties so that when people are faced with—I'll call it the challenge of deciding whether or not they're going to comply with the law, they know that there's a minimum penalty involved, and they're not going to get away with it without facing a very minimum penalty of \$5,000. I think that's very useful. I think it should be in there.

That's just the minimum penalty. The penalty can be very much higher, depending on the severity of the offence. A judge can take those factors into consideration; judges always do. You can go before a judge, and you can argue for the minimum of \$5,000. Somebody opposing you can go before the same judge and argue that you should be subject to a more severe penalty—let's say \$7,500, \$10,000 or even higher. That's the purpose of that section.

Schedule 11 continues on in the same vein; that is to say, in the vein of enforcement. Some people would like to use the phrase "giving legislation teeth." Looking at schedule 11, it deals with the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act. It empowers a penalty for the

purposes of enforcing that act. Of course, this, again, is done for the purposes of enforcement, because it's important to give legislation teeth. That's why that's there.

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Schedule 12 deals with the Nipissing University Act, 1992. It's similar to the previous Algoma University Act set out in schedule 2. You'll notice that all of these various sections—I'll refer to them:

Schedule 2, the Algoma University Act; schedule 12, the Nipissing University Act, schedule 19, l'Université de l'Ontario français Act, 2017; and schedule 20, University of Ontario Institute of Technology Act, 2002. You'll notice that those are all the same. They are extending or giving the possibility of extending the term of the chair who is serving as the chair of the board, giving the possibility of extending that individual's term of office. Those are all consistent with each other. Sorry, I missed one: schedule 13, Ontario College of Art and Design University Act, 2002.

Schedule 14 deals with the Ontario Heritage Act, and that's a very useful section. It says that if you comply with certain terms and conditions, then you will get the certain thing described under that particular act. You don't have to appear in front of a tribunal, you don't have to go to a special courtroom; you get it. You comply with the conditions and you get what you've asked for.

So those are some brief commentaries on what I find to be some very useful amendments to various pieces of legislation. There's more. I've touched very lightly on the ones that I think are primarily significant.

I'd like now to turn my attention to why we do this. Now, I think the Minister of Red Tape Reduction has a goal in mind. I think he wants to hit a certain number. I'm not going to guess what that number is, but I think he wants to hit a certain number. And what he wants to do is, he wants to reduce the cost of regulatory compliance in the province of Ontario. Let's talk about regulatory compliance. Regulations and laws, and regulations and rules, and laws and rules and regulations—comply, comply, comply.

There are actually lots of job positions in the province of Ontario where people's exclusive job description is compliance. It's their job to go and comply with everything else. To make sure the corporation is in compliance, to make sure the hospital—whatever you're working for, whether it's a hospital or a corporation, some type of organization—your job is to ensure compliance. Compliance with what? Compliance with provincial regulation. It is a whole body of law, a whole body of endeavour which hardly, barely existed 100 years ago. And yet, now there are volumes and volumes of compliance.

I'm not against that. I'm not against having a highly compliant society. I think having a highly compliant society, a society where people follow rules and regulations is very good. That's part of what makes us successful as Canadians. But as the Minister of Red Tape Reduction stated earlier, over the course of time these rules and regulations get layered one over another, one over another, again and again and again. And sometimes you look at a regulation and nobody around can even

remember why that thing was enacted in the first place. They become outdated. They must be reviewed. These rules and regulations must be reviewed periodically, and they must be sifted—they must be sifted—to keep the good ones and get rid of the ones that are no longer useful. That's why we go through this exercise on a regular basis.

I want to congratulate the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, because you know what? This is really what I would call basic, fundamental work. It's not glorifying, you don't get to go out there and cut a ribbon, you don't get to open up something or a pair of doors or a highway or anything like that, but really, this is the work that saves billions of dollars. The Minister of Red Tape Reduction is saving the economy billions of dollars. And that is money that gets passed on to people through savings in innumerable. You never see how you save the money here, because when you walk into a store, you don't see all of the regulation. You don't see all of the compliance that took place to get that particular consumable item on the shelf or on the rack. You don't see all that. All you see is the final product. But the people who produce that product, they look at the product and they know where it came from and all the hoops they had to jump through and all the hurdles they had to jump over in order to get that product into the store. So, if you can make it easier to get that product or that service to the eventual end-consumer and preserve all the safeties and preserve all of the good things associated with regulation and compliance, then this is an exercise worth doing and it's worth doing on a regular basis. That's why the Minister of Red Tape Reduction undertakes these exercises frequently and he's done 11 so far.

So, I hope that this particular piece of legislation will pass. I'm thoroughly encouraged by it, and those are my comments, Madam Speaker. I thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the member from Essex on his debate.

Every time one of these bills about red tape reduction comes out, I feel like there's an opportunity for us to listen to some of the people who have come to Queen's Park to tell us about the red tape they're facing. And, I have to say—not that the stuff in here, the changes, are bad, but I have to say I'm always confused why we can't address those things.

I'm thinking about cystic fibrosis and probably because, around my house, there's a lot of posters of cystic fibrosis to remind people of cystic fibrosis. Recently, Trikafta was approved as a drug. But the problem is that, if you have a private health plan and it's not covered, you have to pay upfront or you have to cancel your private health care plan and go on to the provincial health care plan in order to get it.

So this feels like red tape that could be addressed for people. That would really help people that are struggling. I'm wondering, why don't we see these things when people come to Queen's Park and say, "Please, please can you fix this for us?" instead of this sort of busywork?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Well, I mean, listen. These are actually things that were suggested by the people involved

in these industries. We don't follow up on all of them because, quite frankly, there are some regulatory things that the people involved in those activities would like to get rid of but we should not get rid of them because they are enacted for the safety of the public, or there might be other very legitimate rules that we don't want to get rid of and reasons why we shouldn't get rid of those rules.

So, the member says, well, why don't we get rid of this particular thing that he mentioned? And my answer to that is: It might happen, or it might not happen, but I invite him to put it down on paper. I mean, I'm sure that the members of the NDP caucus have lots and lots and lots of opportunities to put private members' bills and they have lots and lots of opportunities to have opposition days and he might want to consider doing it on one of those days or through one of those mechanisms.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my colleague from Essex for his insightful presentation. I was listening to your presentation for 20 minutes. You really made a very insightful presentation.

Madam Speaker, this is a very, very important ministry, a stand-alone ministry serving over 600 million taxpayer dollars. So, my question—simple question—to my colleague: Why was the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction created as a stand-alone ministry? Please explain.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Well, I would like to thank the member for that question because, really, it's a question which—he asks, "Why is this ministry created? Why does it exist?"

The member from Markham–Thornhill is representing his constituents very well and I would like that member to go to his constituents in Markham–Thornhill and tell them that we created this ministry because we recognize that layer upon layer upon layer upon layer of regulation clogs up the system, makes it more expensive for consumers to buy goods, makes it more complicated for small business in particular to deliver good services to their clients, and so we want to help people do that. We want to help small businesses deliver good, efficient services to their clients. We want to help producers, particularly small producers, get their products to market in a cheaper and more efficient way without compromising safety, without compromising quality. That's why this ministry exists.

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you to the member opposite for his speech and his participation in the debate. When I listened to the speaker, many times in his speeches he refers to history. You can tell that he has a great appreciation for history.

In this bill, within schedule 14, they do open up the Ontario Heritage Act—and this is just a general question of him. I'm sure he's had the opportunity to travel to other places within the country, like, let's say Quebec City, Montreal. When you go to places like that, they have very active history and culture in their downtown core—old

cities and whatnot, but when you come to Toronto, with a few notable exceptions, you find almost none of it. Do you think there's more governments can do to protect the heritage of our cities so that future generations will know where we all came from?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I thank the member from Humber River–Black Creek for his comments. I have mixed feelings about this because of my previous experience on municipal council involved in various endeavours such as what he's suggested. I have an enormous appreciation for historical and architectural preservation—an enormous appreciation for it. But I've also seen the other side where municipal councils have, in my view, acted irresponsibly and, rather than in a timely and proper manner designating certain sections of their municipalities or designating certain particular buildings as preserved or historic buildings, they've allowed these buildings to languish on lists, and then a bona fide and decent purchaser comes along and purchases the building and wants to repurpose it or even sometimes demolish it because it's beyond salvation, and then the municipal council pulls the rug out from underneath that purchaser and designates the building. I would love to have a very long discussion about this, and perhaps we'll have that over coffee.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: To the member: About the red tape reduction bill, I know that part of this bill will reduce the administrative burden for our physicians. We really want our physicians to do what they do best, which is taking care of our patients, but I know that, over time, within our health care system, there are more and more forms that need to be filled out—not just by physicians, nurses do it too. But I know that as part of this package, we have identified 12 forms that physicians will no longer be required to actually fill out themselves. Can the member expand a little bit more why it's a good idea to take some of those administrative burdens, some of that red tape, off the table from the physicians to ensure that they have as much time as they can to do what they do best, which is taking care of our patients?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I want to thank the member from Mississauga for that question. I recognize her dual calling as a nurse, which is a wonderful and awesome calling. I congratulate her on that.

Let me, in answer to her question, say this: I want doctors doctoring. I don't want doctors filling out forms. I want doctors doctoring. So whatever we can do to get doctors away from forms and get them doctoring, that's what I want to do. Sometimes I even sit—the member from Don Valley East sits so far away from me, and I want to send him out and tell him, “Go doctor. Go doctor.” But that's another long conversation that I have to have with him over a coffee.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate the member's comments this evening about the red tape reduction bill and, in particular, his answer about how layer after layer after

layer after layer after layer of red tape is the reason that the government created the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction. I'm wondering if he can explain to the House how the number of civil servants and the amount of money the government spends on class A office space in downtown Toronto, as a layer of bureaucracy, helps reduce red tape.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: On the topic of the occupation of office space, here's what I have to say about that: There's a lot of office space in Toronto. I'm not sure if I feel entirely comfortable about paying for probably some of the most expensive commercial real estate in the entire province. But, you know, what I would like to do is I would like to invite people to consider moving their offices to Essex county. Because, you know what? You're going to have an eight-minute commute to work. You're not going to have to fight traffic. You're not going to have to compete with other people who are trying to outbid you for office space. And, quite frankly, in the summertime, Essex county is absolutely the most beautiful place in the world. So I invite everybody in this House to start considering moving government offices to Essex county, and everything that I just said will be absolutely correct.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise this evening to participate in the debate on Bill 139, the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act. I want to start, Speaker, by observing the fact that the amendments that are set out in this bill are at least not as harmful as other red tape reduction measures that we've seen this government implement before.

This is a government that has typically viewed things like regulations around the number of children in a child care centre as unnecessary red tape. It's a government that has looked at clean water protections as unnecessary red tape. So in the case of this bill, it's refreshing to see that the changes that are made are not going to compromise the health and safety of people in this province, which is the kind of red tape reduction measures that we've seen before.

I also want to share with this House that, when I'm in my community, when I'm in my riding and talking to business owners, talking to people involved in economic development about what kinds of policies and legislation would they like to see the government put forward to deal with some of the pressures that businesses are facing, I'm expecting to hear about all of the burdensome red tape that they have to face and how, if only the government could get rid of that red tape, how much better it would be for businesses in London. Instead, Speaker, what I hear consistently is that what businesses need, what they really need from this government is making sure that communities like London can offer new employees who are relocating to London access to a family doctor. That would be a huge win for businesses, as it would be for all Londoners and all Ontarians.

We just heard from the Ombudsman that there are now 2.2 million Ontarians without access to primary care. We know in the London region, from the OMA, that there's

65,000 Londoners without access to a family physician, and that is an obstacle for employers when they are trying to attract new employees to my community. London has a thriving and growing tech sector, for example, and there are always lots of job openings for those specialized tech skills that are needed by those firms. But to attract people to our city, employers want to be able to say, “Don’t worry. When you get to London, you can be sure that you can find a family physician.”

I know that that the package of measures that is attached to this legislation includes some changes to reduce the number of forms that physicians have to fill out, but what I’m really hearing from people in my community who are having trouble finding a family doctor is that the government isn’t really providing much help. They are referring people to Health Care Connect.

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The feedback I get from Londoners about Health Care Connect is that it very, very rarely actually helps somebody find a family doctor. Instead, they are told to cold call—cold call pages, hundreds of doctors’ offices in the city and the surrounding area, just to see if they can possibly find somebody who is willing to take a new patient. To my mind, Speaker, and for the Londoners I talk to who are very frustrated about this situation, that is unnecessary red tape, having to spend hours on the phone or go actually visit these doctors’ offices to see if there’s a possibility of being accepted as a new patient. That is something, if the government could do something about that, that would make a huge difference to both the people who live in our city and also the businesses.

Businesses also tell me they want to be able to offer new employees access to schools. Right now, London has been identified as the fastest-growing city in Ontario and second fastest-growing city in Canada. We’ve seen a huge population growth. The Thames Valley District School Board has identified the immediate need for eight new schools, and then imminent need for, I think it was, another 19 new schools. What we see with the existing schools is that some of them have as many portables on site as classrooms in the building. A government that was responsive to the capital plans put forward by school board, a government that worked with school boards and with municipalities to make sure that those schools could be constructed to deal with the growing population and to ensure that schools are located in the communities where families want to live—that would be a big help to businesses in my community.

The other thing that they tell me is that they need access to transit. You know, we have the London Transit Commission that continues to struggle with the loss of operating revenues in the wake of the pandemic. We saw ridership just drop down drastically, and like many other public transit systems in this province, the London Transit Commission has not been able to recover. We have seen the loss of routes; we have seen service reductions and fee increases, and all of this is an obstacle. Many of the businesses in London are located outside of the LTC bus routes, and it’s very challenging for those businesses to be

able to find workers who can get to those places of employment without that bus service. Those are the kinds of big changes that people and businesses in this province would like to see from this government in order to help them grow their business and contribute to our economy.

With regard to this specific bill, there are 20 schedules. My colleague the member for London North Centre described this bill in his remarks at second reading. He described this bill as a doorstopper bill, because the 20 schedules—although we’ve heard claims from the other side about what a significant difference they will make, they are actually just tinkering around the edges. They are fairly minor changes to 20 different pieces of legislation that are not really going to move Ontario businesses forward. They’re not going to provide the help that families who are dealing with an affordability crisis at a scale we’ve never seen before—it’s not going to do anything to address the real problems that we’re facing in this province.

I want to talk, at some length, about five specific schedules in this bill, Speaker. Schedule 3 amends the Algoma University Act to provide that a member of the board is now able to serve—oh, no. This schedule “provides that a member of the board may not serve for more than six consecutive years. The act is amended to” allow “an exception to that rule ... for a member who is serving as chair of the board.”

So you can’t serve for more than six years, but if you’re chair of the board, then an exception can be made.

Schedule 12 amends the Nipissing University Act in the same way, so it allows “a member who is serving as chair of the board” to serve for more than six consecutive years.

Similarly, schedule 13 amends the Ontario College of Art and Design University Act to make the same change, to allow someone who is serving as chair to serve for longer than six years. The other two institutions whose acts are amended are, in schedule 19, the Université de l’Ontario français Act, and in schedule 20, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology Act.

In each of those five schedules, with five different institutions, the change is all the same: It extends the term for a member of the board of governors who is serving as chair. I don’t know, Speaker, where those changes came from. I’m assuming that a request had been made to the government to make that change. But I can tell you, Speaker, that boards of governors of universities across this province are dealing with some very, very serious financial challenges. Shortly after it was elected in 2019, we saw this government come and announce that there was going to be a 10% cut to post-secondary tuition across the board. That was in 2019. For the next four years, up until now, we haven’t heard anything different. There has been a freeze on tuition.

And I don’t want to say that lowering university tuition was not a good idea, because for 15 years under the Liberals we saw, year after year, Ontario reporting the highest tuition fees in the country. So certainly there was a reason to move ahead with reducing the amount of tuition that students are paying. But the consequence of

this government's decision to implement the cut then freeze tuition at the rate it was was that a \$1.9-billion revenue hole was created in the budgets of all of our post-secondary institutions in this province, without any funding from the government to fill that revenue hole.

So universities have had to deal with that \$1.9-billion loss of revenues. At the same time, they've had to deal with year-over-year reductions in operating grants. We just saw a fall economic statement from this government, and in an analysis from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives they pointed out that in the last five years, when adjusted for inflation and population growth, the post-secondary sector has had an 11% decline in provincial funding from this government. In fact, provincial grants to post-secondary institutions have declined to such a point that they now represent only 30% of overall operating revenues for our post-secondary institutions.

So boards of governors are having to make some very difficult decisions. They're having to look at: Do they eliminate programs? Which programs do they eliminate? Do they freeze hiring? Do they cut staff? They're having to make all these difficult decisions because of the fiscal circumstances in which they find themselves as a result of this government's policy changes. I'm not sure that changing the length of time that a person can serve on the board of governors from six years to more than six years if they're acting as chair is the answer—that that is the solution that universities in Ontario are seeking.

We saw a report just yesterday from the Blue-Ribbon Panel on Post-Secondary Education Financial Sustainability that actually talked about boards of governors of universities. They made some recommendations about the role of boards of governors of post-secondary institutions, ensuring that board members are financially literate and understand the role of board. They also recommended that "A robust risk management program should be in place to identify potential threats to ongoing financial sustainability."

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And you know what one of those potential threats is, Speaker? In the aftermath of all of this loss of revenue—the loss of tuition revenues because of the cut and then the freeze, the decline in operating grants—universities and colleges in particular, in many cases, have had no other choice than to aggressively recruit international students in order to make up that revenue shortfall, and that creates a risk to the financial sustainability of any institution. They actually say in the report, "We would be remiss if we did not raise the Auditor General's identification of the risk to the financial sustainability of the college sector resulting from the considerable expansion in recent years of international student recruitment, and particularly the high reliance on India, which accounts for about 60% of all international students in Ontario colleges."

The Auditor General's recommendation was quite specific: "Do not further increase dependency on international enrolments without a longer-term strategy in place to address the risks of this approach for financial sustainability." There was a recent analysis, in fact, that

said that Ontario colleges are getting more revenue from tuition from students from India—from a single country—than they are getting in operating grants from this government. We have seen geopolitical circumstances that have really affected the ability of universities and colleges to continue to recruit these students that have been such a lucrative revenue stream because, of course, international student tuition is not regulated and universities and colleges are able to increase those tuition fees to whatever level they want.

As I've said, there is an important role for boards of governors of universities to govern the institution and to safeguard the financial sustainability of individual institutions across the province. Changing the length of the term of the board of governors is not what is needed in the sector. What would be needed is to see this government come forward to deal with the revenue gap that has been created. We have the lowest per-student funding in all of Canada. At one time, we had the highest tuition; the government's tuition freeze has lowered it a bit. We're now maybe third highest in Canada, but we continue to have the lowest per-student funding. Compared to the rest of Canada, Ontario funds at a rate of 44% in per-student college funding, 57% per-student university funding.

We have recently heard some very troubling financial statistics from a number of very important institutions in this province: University of Waterloo is reporting a \$15-million operating deficit; Queen's university, a \$63-million operating deficit; Wilfrid Laurier University, an \$11-million deficit; University of Guelph has had to struggle with three consecutive years of budget deficits.

We need to see this government come forward with a plan that is going to ensure the financial sustainability of institutions like Waterloo, like Guelph, like Laurier without affecting the ability of students to access post-secondary education. It can't be raising tuition as the solution to the problems that we are facing in this province.

We heard from the report that they did a demographic analysis looking at the thousands of students in this province who will be looking to access post-secondary education and, in many cases, need financial assistance in order to access that education, which is a benefit. It's a benefit to all of us. It's a benefit collectively to our province. It's a benefit to those students when they graduate and go on to get good jobs and generate taxes which help support this province.

While some of the changes in this legislation are innocuous and they may provide some modest benefit, this bill does not do anything to really address the challenges that we're facing in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from London West, especially for the latter part, when mentioning students and really how to train our next generation to give them the opportunities to have the skill set and the careers that they'd like to have. What I didn't hear mentioned in tandem was our skilled trades. The apprenticeships are vital.

Part of this bill includes new regulations that enable Skilled Trades Ontario to collect and share data on the registration of apprentices, many of whom are coming into the workforce for the very first time, and the exam administration with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. This allows the government to better understand the barriers to entering careers and create more pathways into the skilled trades.

I wanted to see if the member would agree with the government's efforts in this bill to attract more apprentices to in-demand careers.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm not sure if the measures that are included in this bill—actually, it's not clear to me in which schedule those measures are included, but I'm not sure if that is entirely what is needed to attract more students to the skilled trades. Just recently in this House, I had raised a concern on behalf of 60 students at Conestoga College in Kitchener who wanted to write their certification exam and were not able to do so. I've had apprentices in my community of London who, again, wanted to write the certification exam and were not able to do so. There's a lot of work that the government has to do to make sure that the seats are available in the colleges for incoming apprentices and that people are able to write their certification exam so they can go out and start practising their profession.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank my friend from London West for those comments, particularly about students and the future of this province, because I often think that this is sometimes forgotten about, whether it's people studying skilled trades in colleges or universities. I just want to ask the member a question inspired by her remarks.

I struggle to understand why, six months after graduation, we are asking people with OSAP debt to pay us prime-plus-1%. The very notion that government should be making money off students accruing debt offends me. I ask the member for London West: Wouldn't it be a prudent amendment to this bill to take the interest off OSAP? Wouldn't that give people an actual break?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to my colleague for that question. I would actually go a step further. I really believe that any student who is in financial need, who needs financial support to attend post-secondary education, should be able to access that support in the form of a grant rather than a loan. We heard from the Ontario Real Estate Association that student loan debt is the biggest barrier for young people for home ownership in this province. We have to do something about the amount of debt that students are carrying after they attend post-secondary education. Removing interest would be one way—a minor way—but we have to go much further and convert all loans to grants so that students in financial need don't graduate with that huge debt burden on their backs.

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Mr. David Smith: I want to thank the member from London West for her presentation. Last spring, the mem-

ber opposite voted against our Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act. They voted against a measure to improve the response to animal health, to reduce backlogs to our court system, to improve workplace health and safety, to expand broadband access and to support the adoption of innovative technology here in the province of Ontario.

Can the member opposite explain why every time they are given an opportunity to stand up, they say no to reducing red tape?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm not sure if this member was listening to my remarks, if this member is aware of the schedules that are included in this bill. The official opposition supported this bill at second reading. Based on what we heard in committee, there would be no reason not to continue to support.

The bill makes some modest changes, some baby steps that are not going to make the kind of change that we need in this province to deal with the real challenges that people are facing. But I would ask the member why the government is refusing to make those big changes, those red-tape-reduction measures that would make a difference around ODSP, which we've been talking about; about Passport funding; about family physicians?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for explaining the plight of Ontario universities, which are carrying these huge deficits while they are trying to provide important education for our students. I just want to focus a little bit on the students themselves. I know that in Hamilton, in my riding, at McMaster University, they struggle with food banks to support their students, who are living in poverty. Students also have to buy groceries, with the gouging and the cost of groceries. Students are struggling with that. We also have students that can't find places to rent and often end up sharing substandard accommodations.

So could you talk a little bit about what this government could have done in this bill to help students themselves who are struggling with affordability in this province?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciate the question from my colleague.

One of the things that I didn't say is that at the same time that the government made those changes in 2019 to tuition and also beginning the decline in operating grants, the other thing that the government did was restrict eligibility to OSAP. So students are facing access to post-secondary education, which is undermined by the financial pressures that institutions are facing, and at the same time they are less able to access the financial support they so desperately need.

The member is absolutely right: Now is not the time to look at raising tuition for students. Students are struggling with the same affordability pressures that all of us are around groceries and rent and the cost of basic essentials.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. John Fraser: I'd just like to ask the member if she thinks it's strange that, while the government is removing red tape, the RCMP are about to wrap police tape around Whitney Block?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to the member for that question. It is rather ironic. It is rather ironic that we are debating this legislation to reduce red tape at a time that is unprecedented in the history of this province, I believe; that we have a government that is under active investigation, criminal investigation, by the RCMP.

One of the schedules in this bill deals with agriculture, and this is at a time when the government was ready to pave over huge swaths of the greenbelt in this province. The government was ready to remove all of this vital farmland that feeds our province and out of our province, vital wetlands that mitigate climate change. It is highly ironic, and I appreciate the question.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I just wanted to ask the member opposite about schedule 6, which relates to credit unions and caisses populaires. As you know, our government has been committed to caisses populaires and credit unions since taking office in 2018.

“Subsection 174(10) of the act is amended to remove the requirement that membership shares or patronage shares not be used in certain purchases and sales between credit unions.” I just wanted to get the member’s thoughts on that particular schedule.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Like many of the schedules in this bill—and I’ve already said that there are some modest beneficial changes in this bill. That would be one of them. But overall, this bill does very little to address the real challenges that we are facing in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: It’s an honour to rise this evening on Bill 139, red tape reduction. Overall, this bill is fairly innocuous, I expect it is a bill that I will be able to support. A quarter of the schedules, five out of 20, relate to term limits on boards—again, some clean up to things that I guess the government wants to take action on, so fair enough.

One of the things that strikes me is that the government is opening up the Securities Act here. That’s something that’s of real interest to me as a former business person, and I think that there’s a real opportunity that’s being missed here in this bill. Every province in the country—this government talks about red tape reduction: 11 bills and \$950 million. I’ll talk about that in a few moments, but every other province in this country recognizes that when a company gets listed on its exchange, it allows that company to list on the province’s exchange. So for example, if a company lists on the TMX, that company is basically allowed to very easily register on the BC stock exchange. And that reduces red tape for businesses. It reduces red tape for businesses in Ontario, it reduces red tape for businesses across the country, and that’s something that actually does drive productivity, which is, again, something I’m very interested in.

Did you know that Ontario is the only province that is not part of a system called the passport system which allows this co-registration, this harmonization of securities legislation? It actually is a big burden on other companies who are wanting to list in Ontario, and that brings business

here to Ontario. That would be something that would be meaningful in terms of the markets and allowing companies to reduce the red tape that this government is very excited to talk about. So I would encourage the government to think about that, to think about joining in with the rest of the country. Instead of being an outlier, be a partner and join in in harmonizing securities legislation for companies in Ontario and across the country.

The Minister of Red Tape Reduction has a disposition to talking about the savings created by these various legislations: \$950 million. And I kind of have said to the minister in the past that, wow, that number keeps getting bigger and bigger. And yet, there’s no proof to this number. This is a number that the government estimates, that it makes up. It comes up with a few assumptions and extrapolates across a number of businesses. So I would actually invite the government to think about putting their numbers to the test. Let somebody audit their numbers. They like to talk about their clean audit opinions. That \$950 million is a lot of money. I would love to see a clean audit opinion about \$950 million of savings to businesses here in Ontario. I think if we’re doing it, that’s great, but I think when we talk about accountability and being able to demonstrate real action, instead of just talking they should be actually measuring and giving us some evidence on those numbers.

2100

The other thing that that number says to me is that the government is talking a big game about what these bills are achieving. Again, they might be making some modest improvement, I will grant that. But in terms of that kind of savings, Speaker, if that were the case, we would actually likely be seeing an increase in GDP growth in Ontario, yet the latest financial economic outlook shows a decrease. Again, Speaker, we see some inconsistencies here with big numbers being thrown around about savings and red tape reduction. I’d like the government to put their money where their mouth is and actually audit those numbers and give us some real evidence that that is the case.

You know, the rate of bankruptcy of small businesses is going up in Ontario. So again, if these bills are doing so much to help businesses in Ontario be more productive and more efficient, why do we see an increase in bankruptcies in this province? That’s data from Stats Canada.

The other thing, Speaker, that I think the government should think about is productivity. You know, “productivity” is a word that doesn’t appear in this legislation. Productivity isn’t just about reducing red tape; it’s about actually making workers more efficient and making our economy more efficient. One of the things that, again, I’ve talked about several times in this House is daycare for families. While the government is talking now about raising hourly wages for ECE workers, which is commendable, it’s very late. We’ve got families who are waiting for daycare spots. One of those parents is sitting at home, taking care of their child while they wait for a spot to open up. That’s actually hurting the productivity of our province. It’s hurting efficiency. It means that there are

less tax revenues coming in to the coffers of the province to pay for all of the services that we need.

Last night, the members across—the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in particular—talked about how some of us weren't here last night. Well, let me just tell him where I was. I was at an event in my riding, talking about just this: productivity and scalability for businesses in Ontario. We had a speaker—a professor and economist—talking about what is holding Ontario back from scaling its businesses, what is holding Canada back from scaling its businesses. Speaker, I can tell you, red tape did not come up once. What did come up is, “How do we help these businesses commercialize and get bigger faster?” Speaker, I would really love to see some focus from this government on helping businesses commercialize.

And it was interesting. It was an eye-opening discussion. Dr. Charles Plant was our guest speaker. He talked about how one of the things that Ontario and Canada are not doing is tapping into the marketing and sales experience that we need. So while we talk about innovation and R&D—those are important factors—we actually need to be spending time on expanding our ability to market and sell our products. Again, reducing some red tape, that's marginal. It's what we call helping at the margins. But if you actually want to make a real difference in helping business in Ontario, let's talk about, how do we help them scale? How do we help them export to foreign markets to tap into bigger markets? That really does drive productivity and growth in our economy.

Speaker, I would also just like to talk briefly about some of the other schedules around cleaning up the term limits. Term limits are something that people in governance circles like to talk a lot about. Some people think that term limits should be defined, should be eight years—I think this is now where we are, with the chairs of these various boards being tapped out at about eight years. That's probably not a bad thing. Turnover in boards is important. It's part of governance and renewal of an organization, but the quality of the people that you get is also important.

We know that this government has a predilection for appointing their friends to boards. That might be something that would be really good at helping to streamline and drive improvement, productivity and growth in these organizations, because instead of having to mollify your friends and make sure that you're doing things that they agree with, you would actually be getting freethinkers. You would be getting people who are bringing their expertise, their real valuable and relevant experience, to the table, instead of simply appointing your friends or the sister of a developer to a board when you know that what you're going to get is exactly what you want to hear. When you only get ideas that are the ones you want to hear, you're not actually going to make a big difference.

And so, Speaker, I would argue that, again, this bill is something that I will likely be able to vote for; it's somewhat innocuous. But I would really challenge the

government to think a little bit bigger, to think about what they can do to actually help Ontario businesses, scale how they can help our crown corporations here in Ontario have board members who are independent free thinkers—not connected to the Premier or other cabinet ministers, not friends of the government—have wide open, very engaging discussions about the real issues that are facing those institutions. Again, we've got universities here that are struggling, and having board members who have new ideas, new perspectives is positive. I think the government should take a lesson from that and look at their own institutions, where we've got a number of appointees who—of course, several years ago, there was a very big exposé in, I think, the Toronto Star about the number of appointees who are connected to the government. So that might be something that will be a really interesting schedule to include in the next red tape reduction bill. How do you make sure that you get independent experts, qualified people with relevant experience, participating in our organizations?

I'd also like to talk a little bit about the Auditor General. We have a new Auditor General who will need to be appointed soon, and again, likewise, we want to make sure that there is independence in that appointment. That's a very important office. That's the kind of office that could audit that number that the Minister of Red Tape Reduction likes to refer to, the \$950 million. We want to make sure that person is qualified, capable, skilled and independent, and one of the ways to do that is to make sure that you have people who know that business interview that person. So open it up, have people from the auditing profession across the country, across the province—offer some names about who could fill that seat, who would be qualified, and let them participate in the interview. Let them ask questions to probe their level of independence, their level of capability, and make sure that they are people who will be independent and open-minded when they come to looking at the numbers that the government is putting out here around things like the red tape reduction savings.

Speaker, I've talked a bit about shrinking GDP—we've got 0.5% in 2024, as shown in the latest financial economic outlook. Again, this bill is the kind of bill where we could talk about how we make sure that GDP is growing. The government talks about lost jobs in the past, about previous governments. Well, when GDP is shrinking, that means lost jobs. So how do we put schedules in this bill that could actually help create new jobs, make sure that those new businesses are successful, thriving, that they're able to scale, commercialize their business? Red tape, this kind of stuff, is really related to big institutions. We've talked about universities—some of the minor changes in the Securities Act. It's at the margins, so let's actually have some serious conversation about what we can do to drive productivity in our economy—which is doing things like making sure we have every single daycare spot in this province staffed. That means parents who are waiting to go back to work and earn an income to help support their family and put food on the

table and pay the rent or pay the mortgage—whether it’s a first income or a second income, they have that additional income to help them get through this affordability crisis. That would be something that would be very meaningful to the people of Ontario.

Again, this is a bill that I think we can all agree is at the margins. It does some cleanup. Things that are somewhat innocuous can likely be supported.

Speaker, I think we’ve talked about it enough. It’s 9:10. I’d like to move adjournment of this debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Ms. Bowman has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This is—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): No, no. I apologize. One of the members was not in his seat.

Further debate?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions, rather. Questions?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize. You have 31 seconds left.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Speaker, given that this bill is, again, at the margins, minor improvements, and I think we’ve talked about it enough, I’d like to move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I’m sorry. That’s out of order.

Interjection.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I’d like to move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Ms. Bowman has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Is everybody in their seats? Call in the members. This is a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2112 to 2142.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Ms. Bowman has moved the adjournment of the House.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise and remain standing to be counted by the Clerks.

All those opposed to the motion, please rise and remain standing to be counted by the Clerks.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): The ayes are 0; the nays are 52.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion lost.

We will continue with the debate—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Madam Speaker, point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Point of order, I recognize the member from Ottawa.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I would like to wish Brian Saunderson a happy birthday. Happy birthday.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the birthday boy.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I recognize you too. I do want to thank everyone, and I have to say that, given the hour, I feel like I’ve aged two years. But thank you for that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We are now moving on to questions. Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Putting my question above what I know is going to be a raucous movement that’s going to occur in the House very shortly because everybody will be leaving, my question to the member from Don Valley West is as follows: In view of the fact that the Auditor General for the province of Ontario is appointed and vetted through a committee of which 50% is controlled by the opposition and 50% is controlled by the government, that appears to me to be a very effective check on the considerations that the member was mentioning earlier. My question is this: Does she consider it to be an effective check on the considerations that she was talking about?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member for the question. As I was just hearing—I have heard rumours of this before, but have not been officially notified—there is a committee of two. A hiring committee of two, I would say, for a position as important as this is somewhat lacking. So I guess what I would say is that the government has an opportunity at any point in time to make the Liberal caucus an official party, and I, as one of the only chartered accounts in the House, feel I’m quite qualified to add to that vote and would welcome the chance to join that committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I really appreciated the member from Don Valley West talking about the metrics that we need to use to measure success in the province. I was not aware of the decline in the GDP, so thank you for that.

When you hear the PC side of the House talking about success, it really does feel like an alternative universe, because we talk about 2.5 million people that have no family doctor in the province. We see in my riding that food bank usage has skyrocketed over 200% since last year. We see literally people sleeping in tents—or not tents—under bridges in my riding. We see families not able to access timely treatments in health care.

So can you just explain a little bit more about why you think that we need to be more clear on what they’re saying is a success, and some objective measures that you talked about which are saying that we’re not doing so great?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for the question. It’s a very good one.

When we look at whether or not our province is thriving, I would say “thriving” is an indication of overall economic success, and I don’t think we’re thriving. The issues that you identified—the wait times in our hospitals,

the wait list for surgeries, the number of people without a family doctor; one in 10 of people's neighbours in Toronto are visiting food banks—are not the indications of success that I would be looking for if I were sitting on the government side of the House.

So I think that the opportunity to provide real independent opinions from somebody like the Auditor General, who has done such a fantastic job on the greenbelt file, identifying the scandals there, would be a wonderful way to—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Laura Smith: I'm happy to hear that the member is generally supportive of this bill, which is positive. We all want to shed things in a positive light. We're all here for the right reasons. We all want to help our community members.

There's a labour shortage. There's a labour shortage throughout Ontario. There's a labour shortage in Thornhill. I'm happy that this red-tape-reduction package that we're proposing includes regulations to enable Skilled Trades Ontario to collect data, to enable the registration of apprentices and exam administration with the Ministry of Labour. So given this will allow the government to better understand the barriers and create pathways into the skilled trades, does the member opposite agree with our efforts to track more apprentices in in-demand trades?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member for the question. Yes, absolutely, skilled trades have always been and will always be an important part of the economy and the workforce in Ontario, and certainly attracting those kinds of workers and making sure that they have a house to live in that's affordable, and that they can put food on the table, is a really important part of them being a part of our economy and being productive.

The other thing that I would say is that having workers who are right now at home, because they can't find daycare, is something else that would really help our economy. It would drive productivity. Quebec has the highest percentage of women in the workforce because of their \$10-a-day daycare system. They have the highest GDP of any province in the country per capita because of systems like \$10-a-day daycare, and I really would like this government to take action and get that system in place here, so more families can take advantage of it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

2150

Mr. Stephen Blais: Of course, there's nothing we like to talk about more at 10 to 10 in the evening than audits. And so, given the member's deep background and professional credentials in accounting and her role on the board of the Bank of Canada and her extensive credentials in this area, I'm wondering if the member can highlight for the Legislature some of the very good and insightful work that the Auditor General of Ontario has done recently, exposing some of the situations with the government of Ontario.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to my colleague from Orléans for the question. The Auditor General has

served this province well. She and her team—the past Auditor General—did excellent work to identify the facts that we were all searching for around the greenbelt scandal. We all knew it stank, and it took someone like her and her office to find that independent evidence, and it was real evidence, talking about envelopes being passed back and forth at dinners, friends of the Premier's etc.

Somebody like that, who is independent, non-partisan, who has qualifications in knowing how to audit and how to find samples and evidence that is reliable and credible is something that this House desperately needs. When I think about the upcoming audit for the MZOs—and I hope there will be one announced about Ontario Place and the science centre, as well, because I expect she will have lots to find there too.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions? I recognize the member from Simcoe-Bruce—

Interjection: Grey.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I've greyed more over the last year, I can tell you, Madam Speaker—but thank you.

Given the member opposite's comments about the integrity and impartiality of the Auditor General, I wonder if she wishes to comment—because the members opposite seem to think that this government is doing nothing on the environment. The Auditor General, in May of this year, found that we have reduced our greenhouse gas emissions by 27% since 2005. That's 66% of this province that is covered in forests.

I'm wondering if she wishes to talk about the Auditor General's findings about this government's record on the environment.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Happy birthday to the member across. I wish he would tell us how old he was—I wish I could ask the question.

In any case, the previous Liberal government shut down the coal plants. That reduced our greenhouse gas emissions.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Time for one more question.

MPP Jamie West: To the member from Don Valley West: Several times during the debate, she mentioned the phrase “somewhat innocuous.” I'm just wondering, with the brief time we have, what would you want to see in a red tape reduction bill if you could just make it happen?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member for the question. As I mentioned, there are significant changes that could be made to the Securities Act with a very quick stroke of the pen that would make listing here in Ontario even easier for companies and attract more capital. That would be a very easy way to drive productivity and grow our economy.

The other thing that would be fantastic is to reduce the administrative burden on doctors, and certainly members from the official opposition talked about that. We hear nothing but concerns from doctors who are spending, I think, 16 hours a week on administration. That is red tape

and that is something that would make a significant difference for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and talk about the red tape reduction bill. First, if I may, as I participate in the debate, I want to just talk about where it all came from and how it started.

You will recall, Madam Speaker, that when the previous Conservative government was in office, under the Mike Harris government, there was something called the red tape reduction commission. I know some of the members who were here at that time and who worked here at that time will recall that the red tape reduction commission became one of the first in the country to look at regulatory reform to reducing duplication in government. And it was a renowned organization. It was led by a team of public servants. It was a secretariat at the time.

Now, when the Liberals came to power in 2003, guess what the first thing they eliminated was when they came? Did they cut taxes? No. They increased taxes, right? Did they look at other forms of making life better for the people of the province of Ontario? No. They cut the red tape reduction commission and eliminated it. Now, they didn't just eliminate it. What they did, in typical Liberal fashion, was they eliminated the function but left the public servants in the secretariat with nothing to do. Because that is how Liberals in this province operate.

And then what was the result of all of that, colleagues? We went from one of the lowest jurisdictions in terms of regulations, and burdensome regulations, to the highest in North America. So for the Liberals, it wasn't enough just to become the highest in Canada; they said to themselves, "How can we excel at something"—other than destroying the province, because they did that right away. They then decided, "Let's add burden after burden after burden after burden," to the point that we were the most overly regulated jurisdiction in North America. In fact, we were like 200,000 behind our next closest competitor—200,000 additional regulations behind.

And what was the result of that, colleagues? Did all this over-burdensome regulation bring more business to Ontario? No, it didn't. It actually reduced the amount of business here, to the point where people were fleeing the province because they couldn't manage to do business in Ontario profitably. We all remember when Chrysler said—we've talked about this a lot—that they could not do business in the province of Ontario. Do you know why? Because it is the worst jurisdiction to do business in: overregulated, overtaxed, energy costs through the roof. That is the result of the Liberals' time in office. That is what they accomplished.

Now we have come into office. We have come into office and not only did we look at reducing red tape right away, but we also then have a minister responsible for red tape reduction. Premier Harris had a secretariat; we now have a minister responsible for red tape reduction. The members opposite think that reducing costs for businesses by almost a billion dollars is somehow a joke and it's not

something that we should do, right? But we went even further than that. We cut costs for businesses. For our small, medium and large job creators, on top of reducing the burden by \$1 billion, we then reduced taxes by over \$8 billion. What is the result? Guess.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Jobs.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes, it's jobs, 100%. It's jobs and opportunities—700,000 people who have a job that didn't have a job before. Because that's what happens when you give people the tools to succeed. They take you up on it and they succeed, Madam Speaker.

Now, the member for Orléans earlier got up and he asked a question of the member for Essex. He said, "Well, what about all of the office space the government has all over downtown Toronto for the government?" Madam Speaker, in their wisdom, the Liberals decided that they would close all government offices at the same time. Not just one while renovating a floor, the entire government complex of offices was closed at the same time. And do you know what you had to do? At the time when office prices were at their highest, the Liberals decided, "Let's close them all down and renovate it." So yes, we do have office space, but congratulations, we have that office space because of you. Now, we'll finish the job, make it right. We'll move people back in and we'll reduce the amount of office space that is being used. Because that is what Conservatives do: We make things right.

The members opposite talked about, introduced into—I remember one of the current Liberals, who used to serve on the Bank of Canada. We all know how much people love the Bank of Canada right now. We all know how much they love the Bank of Canada. Think about it.

Interjection.

Hon. Paul Calandra: There's the Liberal leader, screaming and hollering, screaming and hollering. Look at the Bank of Canada and what they did. When we were in office federally, do you know what happened? Interest rates were low, the economy was booming. The Liberals came in: "The budget will balance itself." That never happened, Madam Speaker. What did we see? We've seen the highest increase in interest rates in living history—the fastest speed.

Now, Madam Speaker, we have people in this province, because of the policies—the Liberals go out and find a governor of the Bank of Canada and I'm sure she's done and accomplished a lot of great things. I'm sure she's accomplished a lot of great things. But it's probably not something that I would be celebrating right now when this government has to go after the Bank of Canada to tell them, "Stop increasing interest rates." When we were alone in the fight to stop the increase of interest rates, they were against it. Alone on this side of the House in bringing down costs for the people of the province of Ontario—we stood alone.

Now, Madam Speaker, I want to read something to you, because they talk about the greenbelt, and we've said we made some mistakes on the greenbelt; that's why we have legislation to put things right. But it was mistakes built on the basis that we wanted to build homes. I want to read

something to you, Madam Speaker: “A top aide to former Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty was sentenced on Wednesday to four months in jail for his role in wiping government computers” in two failed and cancelled gas plants.

Now, let’s go on: “Justice Timothy Lipson said at the sentencing that he agrees with the crown’s contention that Livingston attempted to interfere in the democratic process and that ‘incarceration is necessary’....

“His conduct”—the conduct of the previous Liberal government—“was an affront to, and an attack upon, democratic institutions and values” of our province. That is the legacy of the former Liberal government.

The current Liberal leader is only sitting in his place because his predecessor, the person that he replaced, was forced out because of this scandal and sentenced to jail. In the time that I’ve been here, the only people who have broken ethics rules are the member for Kitchener Centre and the Liberals who had a chief of staff sent to jail.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move the adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Mr. Calandra has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This is a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2202 to 2232.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Mr. Calandra has moved the adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise and remain standing to be counted by the Clerks.

All those opposed to the motion, please rise and remain standing to be counted by the Clerks.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): The ayes are 46; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion carried.

Debate adjourned.

TAXATION

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Government of Canada should take immediate steps to eliminate the carbon tax on natural gas and propane used for agricultural purposes.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I would ask the member to repeat the motion.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Government of Canada should take immediate steps to eliminate the carbon tax on gasoline.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member from Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I am so grateful to be participating in this debate tonight, because I thought this was going to be a dry discussion about tax policy, but it has turned into so much more than that. It’s turned into a great debate over competing philosophies existing in the province of

Ontario. On the one hand, we have a philosophy that was employed for 15 solid years. I touched on that philosophy last night. It was the philosophy of the Liberals in the province of Ontario. The philosophy of the Liberals in the province of Ontario was that in order to save the planet you had to do it through taxation. That was their—

Interjections.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: That was their philosophy because, of course, under Liberal philosophy, as we have seen for 15 solid years previous to this government, taxation was the solution to everything, right? We saw at the advent of that 15 years of government that the Liberals brought in the biggest single tax increase in the history of the province of Ontario. They said that it was called the Employer Health Tax, and it was going to fix health care forever. Remember that? Now, I have said this before, and I’ll say it again: I’m not old enough to remember Premier Harris. I’m not old enough to remember Premier Rae, but I’m old enough to remember Premier McGuinty. He said he was going to fix health care forever. How? Through taxation, because taxation is the Liberal’s solution to everything.

After they introduced to the biggest tax increase in the history of the province of Ontario, they laid off nurses. They trained fewer doctors. They reneged on a promise to build a hospital in Essex County. And then, they drove up the biggest debt in the history of the province of Ontario, causing Ontario to be the most indebted sub-sovereign jurisdiction in the entire world. That is the Liberal legacy.

Now, more than once, I have invited members of the opposition to answer this question, because they say, “You’re blaming the previous government. You’re blaming the Liberals who ran the province for 15 years.” I asked the question. I asked it freely. None of them have answered my question. The question I asked is, “How long do you think it’s going to take for this PC government to undo the massive damage done by the previous Liberal government over 15 years?” I’ve never received an answer. But I will tell you this. I will tell you this: What I had forgotten, and what the government House leader had reminded me of, is not only did the Liberals introduce the biggest tax increase in the history of the province of Ontario, and not only did they drive Ontario into huge debt, making it the most indebted sub-sovereign jurisdiction in the entire world; what the government House leader reminded us just a moment ago is that they also made Ontario the most massively overregulated jurisdiction in all of North America. I had forgotten that part.

Once upon a time, Ontario had great economic development, because you could invest and get stuff done in Ontario, but over the course of 15 years, the Liberals’ layer after layer of new regulation, new laws and new regulation—they made it impossible for you to get anything done—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member from Essex. Please bring the House—just the tone down a little. I know it’s late, but please bring it down just a little. Thank you.

I’ll go back to the member from Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: They made it so impossible to get anything done—

Mr. Stephen Blais: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Further to standing order 25(b), the motion is in reference to the elimination of the carbon tax on gasoline, and not in relation to any record of any political party. So I would ask the member to discuss the elimination of carbon tax on gasoline.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I will overrule that and allow the member to continue.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: In the course of 15 years and in reference to taxes on gasoline, all they ever did was raise taxes on gasoline, right? Now, let's just take a pause here. Let's just take a pause.

At any given time, you could ask the member from Essex to stand up and say, "Talk about your government's record." I'm going to stand up. I'm going to proudly talk about my government's record, but when we start talking about the Liberal record, then the members in the Liberal independent caucus stand up and go, "Please don't talk about the Liberal record. Please don't talk about that." Well, you know, I'm going to talk about that Liberal record. I'm going to talk about it.

2240

In relation to carbon taxes on gasoline—because, you know what, the Liberal philosophy is, as I stated previously, taxation is the solution to everything. They wanted to save the planet, so what they did is they said, "Well, let's save the planet through taxation." That's what they were going to do. And so, what they did is they taxed gasoline and they taxed it more, and then they said, "How can we hide more taxes in gasoline? Let's introduce the federal carbon tax so that we can hide more taxes in the gasoline and that will create so much pain at the pumps." Right? That was the goal. The goal of carbon taxes, as introduced by the federal Liberal government, is to create so much pain at the pumps that people can't afford to drive a car. That is the philosophy of the Liberal Party of Ontario. That was the methodology they employed: create pain, save the planet. That was the methodology.

Well, let me tell you why even my 16-year-old kid could see through that scam and tell you it was going to fail, and fail miserably—because, you know what, in Essex county, we produce stuff. Now, we all know that the Liberals don't like producing stuff. That's why they killed 300,000 jobs in Ontario, killed 20,000 jobs in the county of Essex and caused Sergio Marchionne—remember Sergio Marchionne? Sergio Marchionne: a saint in my eyes, a saint because he was the CAO of Chrysler Canada—a great employer, an economic powerhouse in the province of Ontario. Saint Sergio Marchi had to break his silence as the president and CAO of Chrysler Canada and say, "Please rescue us from this Liberal government, because we will not put another nickel into the province of Ontario because doing business in Ontario is awful under this Liberal regime." Saint Sergio Marchi had to say that,

and still couldn't get through to the Liberals because their dedication to Liberal philosophy is solid and unbreakable.

Taxation under Liberal philosophy is the salvation of the planet. That is Liberal philosophy. That's why we have a federal carbon tax on gasoline, because they are seeking—

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Point of order. I recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I just wanted to remind the member that later in his career, Sergio Marchionne was the CEO of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles worldwide, so his words mean so much more. So I thank the member for—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): That's not a point of order.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm so grateful. I forgot that not only was Sergio Marchionne a saint, but he was also that. And I mispronounced his name. It's Sergio Marchionne, not Sergio Marchi; that's a totally different person. But I'll tell you, Sergio Marchionne had a lot in common with the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore over here. They have two things in common: (1) They're involved in the automobile industry; (2) they're both of Italian heritage. So, my colleague over here might also reach sainthood one day, and I encourage him to do so.

But I was in the process of explaining how the Liberals, under 15 years of their disastrous reign in the province of Ontario, had raised taxes to record levels, had raised debt to record levels, had raised regulations to record levels and had alienated saint Sergio Marchionne to the point where he had to break his silence and condemn the Liberals as they ought to have deserved to be condemned. That's where we were.

In relation to the carbon tax on gasoline, which was graciously bestowed upon us by the federal Liberal government, that is going to fail. We knew it was going to fail. My 16-year-old son knew it was going to fail. Here's the analogy that I will provide—it will make no sense whatsoever to Liberals because we cannot break their philosophy, but it will make sense to the members of the PC caucus because they will recognize it right away. You see, I come from an area where we produce stuff, like I was saying before. Liberals didn't believe in that. That's why they said we should transition away from manufacturing stuff and, I don't know, ride—

Interjections.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: What? No. Rainbows and unicorns? I think that's what they wanted, so we should transition away from real stuff and concentrate on rainbows and unicorns. But we need real stuff in Essex county. Some of the real stuff we actually produce—tomatoes, cucumbers, awesome greenhouse vegetables—are grown in the most important and biggest greenhouse industry in North America. You would think that would be somewhere with a warmer climate, but because of the awesome ingenuity of immigrants who came to this country and started businesses in their garage, because they weren't killed by Liberal over-regulation but rather graced by governments such as ours, who actually have dedicated

ministers to remove red tape and stimulate entrepreneurs to create great businesses. They created the greenhouse industry which is situated primarily in the town of Leamington, located in the riding of Chatham-Kent–Leamington, represented by this awesome professional right in front of me. At least 1,500 trucks leave that area every day, go down Highway 3—which, by the way, this government is expanding from two to four lanes, thus fulfilling a broken promise made by the Liberals; we are fulfilling the promise to expand it from two to four lanes.

Interjections.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: That's right.

These trucks travel down Highway 3 and bring these awesome products—greenhouse vegetables—to market. If you have to travel 45 kilometres down Highway 3 to get those products to market, it doesn't matter whether the price of gas is \$1.50 a litre or \$1.80 a litre or \$2; you still have to travel the same 45 kilometres. The truck doesn't magically convert itself into something different that doesn't consume less gas; you still have to travel the same 45 kilometres. That's how you know that this plan, the federal Liberal carbon tax, the plan to create pain at the pumps, was going to fail—because it wasn't going to stop those trucks from travelling the 45 kilometres that they need to travel. Those trucks still have to go that 45 kilometres. All it was going to do was cost more for gasoline. It was going to create pain at the pumps, and it was never, never going to stop the earth from changing.

The federal Liberal carbon tax, as cooked up as it was, was a revenue-generating scheme. It was to create pain at the pumps under a philosophy designed under the Liberal government which thinks that taxation solves everything. Everybody could see through that, unless you had that philosophy that you couldn't break through.

Like I said, I thought that this was going to be a very dry discussion over taxation policy and that maybe people wouldn't be so interested in discussing a topic like this, but it actually turned out to be a great discussion about competing philosophy. The philosophy as represented by the PC caucus of Ontario: Scrap the carbon tax. The philosophy as represented by the Liberal Party of Ontario, now independents: Taxes save the world.

And on that theme, I move that we adjourn the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Mr. Leardi has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This is a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2249 to 2319.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Members will please take their seats.

Mr. Leardi has moved the adjournment of the debate. All those in favour of the motion, please rise and remain standing to be counted by the Clerks.

All those opposed to the motion, please rise and remain standing to be counted by the Clerks.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): The ayes are 44; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion carried.

Debate adjourned.

WORKING FOR WORKERS FOUR ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, QUATRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 16, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 149, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 149, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi, le travail et d'autres questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you very much, Speaker. I—

Interjection: If you leave now, you can get home.

MPP Jamie West: Labour never rests.

We're debating Bill 149, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Labour never rests.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you. There's an echo.

I want to start with the good news on this—

Interjections.

MPP Jamie West: I'm giving time for people to leave.

In this bill, there's a presumptive coverage for esophageal cancer for firefighters and I had the opportunity, Speaker, to speak with the minister earlier today about this. It's very similar to MPP Jeff Burch's bill from Niagara Centre—I think it might even be improved on the bill that he had for Captain Craig Bowman. I think this is one of those times where you have to congratulate all of the colleagues for working together. This is an important thing. There are times in here when we're adversarial and we criticize, but I think, recognizing the importance of this work and taking a good idea like my colleague had and working with the previous Minister of Labour and the new Minister of Labour, that this is the highlight of the bill, honestly. This is the part of it that we can all come together and feel proud about.

I think there was an opportunity maybe in the previous bill to do it as well, because I know when I was debating the previous labour bill on this, a lot of the questions that the government asked me were: Would I support presumptive WSIB coverage for firefighter cancer? And I have to remind the government that it wasn't in that previous bill. But this really is a solid thing, and I know it's a late hour—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member from Sudbury. Our error, but it's actually time for questions. So questions to the speech by the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's time for questions. I apologize to the member. If you would like your time—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): You're okay? We're going to ask the member from Sudbury—I'll give you the floor. You have your first question.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you, Speaker. I mentioned earlier about the positive aspect of the bill. One of the things I want to talk about, though, or ask about, is that there's parts of this bill that are already in legislation. For example, wage theft is already illegal; it's in section 13 of the Employment Standards Act. We know that there have been 10,000 fewer ESA investigations, from freedom of information, and we know that Ontario workers are owed \$9 million which has been stolen through wage theft and has never been collected or enforced by the Ministry of Labour.

So my question is, instead of reminding people that wage theft is illegal—because it already exists—why not enforce and get back the \$9 million that was stolen from workers?

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you very much for the question from the member opposite, and thank you for acknowledging the important shared work on esophageal cancer. I appreciate the question.

This bill includes a number of measures to strengthen the Employment Standards Act, which includes a number of prescriptive measures on dine-and-dash, gas-and-dash. While, without question, we talk about wage theft in the Employment Standards Act, there are specific elements that we continue to see at restaurants and at gas stations—and one is too many. We also have employment standards officers, and I made it very clear in the announcement that we'll be ensuring that they're robustly investigating and addressing cases where this exists.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: I want to start off by thanking the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development and the parliamentary assistants from Mississauga–Malton and Scarborough Centre for their incredible job on this fourth Working for Workers act.

I think all the aspects of this bill, the fourth Working for Workers, make the bill stronger. Today I want to focus on how the banning of Canadian work experience for those who have experience from abroad—how that will elevate their lifestyle away from home and how that will boost the economy for Ontario and how much it would boost the economy in Ontario. If the minister can highlight that, I think that will definitely open the eyes of the members opposite.

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the incredible member. What a strong voice from Scarborough. I appreciate your leadership. Thank you for that important question.

The answer is simple: \$100 billion.

This is something that Ontario, under the leadership of Premier Ford, has shown leadership on. I was just at the

federal-provincial-territorial dinner before it was cut short for votes today, and the minister from Nova Scotia came up to me and said, “Boy”—the new minister in Manitoba said, “We've seen you in the papers a lot lately, and what you're doing with your Premier, Doug Ford. What leadership on Canadian work experience.”

So it's \$100 billion—because the door is slammed shut on skilled workers; only one in four are practising in their field. By removing this prescriptive Canadian work experience, we're saying, “Get in the door and talk about competencies, so that immigrants and newcomers can practice what they're trained to practise and contribute to their full potential in the Ontario economy.”

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: To the minister: Thank you for your words here tonight.

I want to read a letter that I received from a constituent, someone I met:

“Dear MPP Sandy Shaw,

“Hi Sandy,

“You may remember me. We met on Remembrance Day in Dundas—with my two dachshunds.” I remember the dachshunds very well, and her.

She said, “Here's what brings me to this letter:

“We are experiencing a cost-of-living crisis and 30,000 Ontario Public Service (OPS) workers have not had a real pay increase in almost 10 years. These are the people who keep the wheels of this province turning. Without them, we could see a surge in unsafe workplaces and a risk to public safety due to critical understaffing, hiring and retention issues.

“OPS ... workers are the people who fight wildfires and keep us safe. They are early childhood educators who support students living with disabilities.”

Her concern is the capping of wages at 1%. She said, “Bill 124 was ruled unconstitutional by the Ontario Supreme Court....”

My question to you is—we're working for workers, but these are very important workers in our province who feel disrespected by this wage cap that has been imposed on them.

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. I'm honestly only ever recognized by my dog, Max, so I appreciate the question from that member opposite. I respect the email from that constituent, I respect their concerns and I appreciate that.

2330

What I'm hearing is the biggest pressure point on everybody is a job-killing carbon tax. We know that the NDP would triple the carbon tax. It's a price on farmers, it's a price on processors, it's a price on truckers, it's a price on home heating and it's killing everyone, regardless of whether they're a small shopkeeper, whether they work fighting wildfires, whether they drive a pickup to go fight on the front lines with the Cobourg Police Service—regardless, it's a job-killing carbon tax. I hope members opposite will join us in fighting and calling on their cousins federally to axe the tax.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Speaker, I grew up in a household where my father was a firefighter with the city of Kingston. I knew a lot of his friends and colleagues, and I truly understand that firefighters are true heroes who work tirelessly to protect others, and that the physical and mental stresses they face take a toll.

I'd like to ask the minister: How will this bill help firefighters who have been diagnosed with life-changing illnesses as a result of their service, or when they have been injured on the job?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Sorry. To the member from Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, I want to say thank you to the member for the wonderful question.

Firefighters are everyday heroes, and they deserve our support. We are taking action to help and assist our brave firefighters and fire investigators dealing with cancer after workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances and chemicals, by lowering the employment period needed to receive presumed or automatic compensation when diagnosed with cancer from 25 to 15 years. What does this mean? If there is a firefighter who has work experience of, for example, 22 years, 23 years, 24 years or earlier, they would not be considered automatic; now, under this bill, thanks to the minister and thanks to the Premier's leadership, we are going to support our firefighters and they will be automatically compensated for their critical services.

We appreciate the work that firefighters are doing, and we'll continue to support our firefighters.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Really, it's more of a comment to the Minister of Labour: I want to share in the congratulations for including the work that we've done on the Captain Craig Bowman Act. I want to share with the House that Captain Craig Bowman was my cousin, so it's very personal. We understood that this family not only struggled to support one another, but that they spoke to members of the government; they spoke to the Minister of Labour, the previous Minister of Labour, who committed to making this change when Craig, as you said, was on his deathbed.

I'm very, very grateful to see that the new Minister of Labour has kept that promise and is in fact implementing it in a bill that we can support. We were concerned that this bill would include some things that were unsupportable, and that would make it a very difficult position for all of us, especially given that the family deserves this, as do all firefighters' families. So I just want to say thank you to the minister for doing this on behalf of Craig Bowman's family.

Hon. David Piccini: I think it was the labour critic from the NDP who once—I enjoy speeches, because you

learn a bit about members opposite, and I didn't know that about that member until she mentioned that to me.

I think this is a meaningful moment where we can come together to do the right thing. Often, things start with a story, and it's really unfortunate that it's this story of Alisen, of Lexi, of the Bowman family, of their hero, the dad, the husband, Craig Bowman, but it's the right thing to do, and I'm glad we all can unite in supporting our firefighters.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

I want to ask the member from Sudbury if he would like the full time on the clock. We interrupted him earlier. Would he like to continue?

MPP Jamie West: I'll take the full time. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Okay, full time on the clock—and you can start from the beginning. We apologize for the interruption. To the member.

MPP Jamie West: That's fine. I appreciate having the full time, because I think it is important to recognize the good work that came together around the Captain Craig Bowman Act that was incorporated into the schedule. It is worth repeating, because there are a lot of times in this House where it feels adversarial and it feels like nothing is good enough in moving things along. The private conversations that I had, just briefly, with the minister around this, and his conversations with the family, and I know my colleague from Niagara Centre, MPP Jeff Burch, the conversations he had with the family that I don't think I'm at liberty to share—it's meaningful to these families.

My previous role was in health and safety, and across from my office were the people who took care of, I guess, WSIB; we used to say "comp." Many times, these family members who were suffering from occupational disease—it isn't so much about their compensation as they want closure for their family. They want to know that they've done everything they can for their family before they pass on, and it's a race against time.

This evening has been a bit of a weird evening, with debates and closure motions and 30-minute breaks and all kinds of stuff, and sometimes it feels confusing or fruitless, what we're doing. But things like this are meaningful to family members. It's going to affect a lot of family members and firefighters—that they get the presumptive coverage for esophageal cancer in firefighters.

A lot of what I'm going to be talking about in the bill is going to be a bit of a "Yes, and." Obviously, this is an amazing accomplishment to have and shouldn't be diminished. But what we need to do as a next step is we need to extend this to the wildfire fire workers, to be included in the definition of firefighters—that it be covered by this presumptive coverage and any other presumptive coverage under the WSIA. That change isn't here. It's the least we can do. We have to recognize, last year, with the record fires that we had—we had 50 fire crews short, because the Conservative government cut 67% of the funding for the wildfire management programs, so that means more of our wildfire firefighters out

in the field more often, being more exposed to things. So if they're also being exposed to workplace cancers, we should be recognizing them just as well. We shouldn't be differentiating who are the heroes when it comes to firefighting. Like the minister said, these are the people who rush in while we're rushing away from fires.

A lot of this bill, and honestly, the previous working bills—it isn't that they're not supportable per se, but I think they missed the mark in terms of what workers are really looking for and bigger steps, and I think that Captain Bowman is a great example of that larger step that people are looking for. Someone asked me earlier about this, and I said I feel like we've taken—in the fourth bill, we've had four tiny steps or four inches in the middle of a marathon, and there's a lot more we can do. I'm going to talk about some of the sections and schedules and how effective they are or maybe aren't and how they can be improved.

Also, as I said earlier in questions and comments, there are parts of this that already are legal requirements—so echoing that it's a legal requirement, to me, is the equivalent to really, really, really wagging your finger at somebody when they're doing something wrong. I don't know if after that, we're going to upscale to frowning at them. At some point, when there are bad employers—and there are some bad employers. There are some great employers, but there are some bad employers who are ripping off employees. There are some bad employers taking advantage of their employees. There are laws in place to protect employees, and if we are not enforcing them, if we're not aligned on enforcing them—we should be, if you really want to take care of workers and employees.

I'm going to talk about schedule 1, Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act. In a nutshell, it requires that a pay period as set out in the act not exceed the prescribed number of days, and so—it doesn't quite say what is the prescribed number of days straightforwardly, but it just says you're going to be paid within a certain pay period. And that makes sense, so you have some stability.

2340

Basically, “digital platform workers” is just a fancy way of saying “gig workers.” We're talking about Uber and Lyft; we're talking about delivery services; we're talking about these gig-worker jobs. We're talking about the careers at Foodora food service delivery—when those workers were able to unionize and improve their way of life, that company pulled right out of Ontario completely. The reality is that all this does is water down minimum-wage protections that they would have had otherwise.

So what's happening for these gig workers is that you are out on a call—you're a Lyft driver, you're a delivery driver or whatever else—and you are waiting. I think back to when I was in high school and I had a job at Baskin Robbins; if anybody wants a great milkshake or something, I know some recipes. But when I was at Baskin Robbins, if it was really busy, I was paid minimum wage, and if it was slow, I was paid minimum wage. If no one came and no one called and no one showed up, there wasn't a gap in my pay. It was hours worked, hours paid.

But what happens with this is the Conservative government, Speaker, seems very comfortable to have these gig workers misclassified as contractors. They're not contractors. And we know, because this goes up to court cases on a regular basis and it's lost. They're employees. They don't meet the metric of what it means to be a contractor. Somehow, we have glamourized this as, “You're contractors and you set your own hours and stuff,” but we know that's not the fact.

What happens with this schedule of the bill and previous bills coming together is that these workers, in their shift while they're working, as high as 60% of the time may not be driving somebody, they may not be delivering food, they may be waiting for the next app to come through, the next delivery—especially if you have more and more people going into these jobs because they can't find other jobs.

So what you're telling these workers who are available, ready and willing to work—just imagine, like anybody else. If you think of our assistants who come into our offices, we don't just pay them when they pick up the phone; we pay them for the amount of time they're there. And if there is extra time, we pay them overtime. Those are protections that are afforded to every employee under the Employment Standards Act.

But when we pretend that these gig workers aren't employees of these companies, what we tell them is that, “You don't get those protections of the Employment Standards Act. You are not as important. So in that 40% of the time, as high as 60% of the time, when you aren't actually performing the work, we're not going to pay you.” I tell you, if you had told this to workers who were protected under the Employment Standards Act, there would be a riot. But somehow this is slipping between the cracks. We can't afford to have it happen anymore. We can't allow it to happen anymore.

And so what we should be doing—this is the “Yes, and” part of the debate. What we should be doing is, MPP Peggy Sattler—I think it's London West; it's difficult when you know the names better than the riding names—had a Preventing Worker Misclassification Act, and that's what we could do. We can stop these multi-billion-dollar companies. These are not mom-and-pops; Uber is doing pretty well. We can stop these multi-billion-dollar companies that are preying on vulnerable workers and pretending that they're not employees so that they don't have to pay certain fees and be accountable for certain things. And then by doing this, by moving them from contractors to employees, it would give them a lot more rights and powers, it would allow workers to have more money in their pockets and it would give them rights that contractors don't have. And then further to that, what it would allow when you are not a gig worker, when you're not misclassified as a contractor: It would give those workers the ability to unionize, which time and time again, these workers try to do.

So if you really want to tell people that you're out and you have the backs of workers and you support workers, if you really want to know the key to a middle-class

lifestyle, it is a unionized job. By and large, history has demonstrated that time and time again: As union density grew, the middle class grew. And you see in the States as union density is collapsing, the middle class is collapsing as well. If you want to put money in workers' pockets, if you want a future, if you want them to retire with pensions, if you want them to have health benefits, then allow them a better path to unionize.

I want to share a story too—if you want to help workers—about the GoBolt Drivers Union. The GoBolt Drivers Union are last-mile parcel delivery drivers for a company that claims to be socially and environmentally responsible. The company is called GoBolt.

“Back in June”—I’m reading the notes here—“we unionized with Teamsters Local 938. A few months later on September 28, during union first contract negotiations, all 23 of” these workers “from the Markham facility were terminated overnight, a day before our third bargaining session.

“The company announced its intention to transition to a ‘fleet operator’ model and replace us ... with new drivers working for small third-party companies who get their workers from temp agencies.”

So you have workers in a career, in a field, who band together and say they want to unionize, they want a better contract, they want to exercise their human rights to unionize. You have a company that says, in the middle of negotiations, after they passed the union vote, “No. You’re all fired. We’re going to farm it out to temp workers,” who basically don’t have any protections. These workers have been out for more than a month. They have filed an unfair labour practice and they’re waiting for a ruling on this. Many of them have experienced financial hardship holding the line over the last five or six weeks, after being fired for joining a union.

If you want to help workers, stop making it legal to fire them for joining a union.

They have already launched a public campaign to be rehired. You can find their links to social media, their campaigns, media coverage, solidarity GoFundMe at—just look up GoBolt Drivers Union. I’m not going to read the whole link on it.

It is very, very important to talk about GoBolt and to talk about the CEO, Mark Ang, and that you cannot be silent in things like this and tell people that you care about workers, that you have their backs, if you are not standing up for workers who are trying to fight for a better life for them and their kids—because workers always have kids—and their families. If they are coming together to unionize and trying to have a better pay structure and life—and it’s not automatic, with a union. There’s a negotiation system that happens, right? You can’t negotiate your way to a place that puts the company out of business. But there is a sense of fairness.

So what I’m seeing from the Conservative government is that when it comes to photo ops, when it comes to talking about the heroes and how much we love workers and stuff—all in. But when workers need your back, when they need support, we do not see it. So saying that we have

a bill that is all about workers is one thing, but if you don’t have their backs, then don’t say that you do.

The next section I want to talk about is an area that I’ve called “This is already a law!” And there are a couple of schedules in here—sometimes there’s one, or sometimes it’s a clarifying one. But honestly, there’s a whole section in here where the schedule should just be called “This is already a law!” And I don’t mind sharing—I’ve always been fascinated with labour law. I find it interesting. I enjoy it.

One of them is about work during trial periods. It’s going to amend the definition of “employee” to incorporate work performed during a trial period. This happens a lot to workers, especially in the service industry. They will tell the worker, “Well, we’re not sure if we’re going to hire you, so you’re going to be on a trial shift tonight”; “We’re not quite sure tonight how it worked out. You’re getting a trial shift tomorrow.” Actually, in Toronto, about a dozen years ago, there was a gas station that trialled an employee for multiple months—and major penalties when it was found out about this. They weren’t paying him because he was in training for multiple months. So this schedule is telling people that this is illegal, but the reality is, it’s already illegal to do this. That’s why I called this “This is already a law!” These are things that employers should already know.

When I drive home later on—I was talking about this earlier with some of my colleagues. There’s a new speed zone, safety zone, near my house. If I speed through that school zone, they’re not going to write a thing reminding me that this is a law, because speeding is already a law. And I shouldn’t have to explain to the Conservative government and their legal team that we don’t need legislation that is already a law.

I’m going to go to the second one. The second one—and it was praised a lot. The best part of these bills, Speaker, as I talked about in the past, is they’re headline bills. I almost know everything in the bill from all the press conferences that the Minister of Labour has the week prior to the bill coming out. It sounds really good, from the press conferences—the titles are great.

2350

The Employment Standards Act now is going to prohibit requiring Canadian experience in job postings, and so when you talk about that and newcomers and Canadian experience—and absolutely, there should be a way to attest for this. But—fun fact—this is already illegal. You don’t need to pass it here. It’s already illegal. It’s part of the Ontario Human Rights Code. It has been illegal since 2013. It’s 10 years old; it has been around for a decade. I’m assuming that in the Ministry of Labour, they found out this was happening and they said there should be a law, but someone in the room should have put their hand up and said, “Hey, it already is a law. It’s in the Ontario Human Rights Code.” It’s not even an obscure law. The Ontario Human Rights Code “makes it illegal for an employer to put out a job ad, use an application form, or ask applicants questions that directly or indirectly classify them under a prohibited ground of discrimination.

Employers must not refer to Canadian experience at the application stage.” That feels pretty straightforward.

So, again, how do employers get away with this? Well, it’s not enforced. You have to enforce the laws. You can’t just keep saying, “There is a law; there is a law”—I mean, it’s funny, for a debate, for me to do that. But honestly, the reason wage theft happens, the reason that people are allowed to work for free and it’s called a trial or a training period is because unscrupulous employers—so think of the best employers that you know—not them; the ones that make them embarrassed. We all know people like this. If you’re a landlord, you know a landlord who is a terrible landlord, who just makes you roll your eyes. And the same if you’re a tenant: You know there are tenants who are not the best tenants in the world, and it’s very frustrating, as a tenant.

There are employers out there that are horrible employers and treat their employees terribly. They steal from them; they make them work for free. They ask questions about Canadian experience. They break the law on a regular basis, and us rewriting laws that already exist is not going to improve things; all it’s going to do is allow them to get away with it longer. You want to stop it? You stop it the same way that the police will stop speeding in the school zone: You hold them accountable; you fine them; you charge them. But you cannot think that waving your finger is going to stop anything.

The Workers Action Centre reached out to me to explain this. The reason that this doesn’t happen is that if you want to enforce this, you have to go through the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario. They currently have a backlog of 9,000 cases. So if you have been exploited like this, if you’ve been asked for Canadian work experience, you have to wait three to five years to get a hearing on this. First, you have to know it exists—because it’s not being enforced—then you have to bring a complaint forward, then you have to wait three to five years. I asked, “Why is this backlog so long?” Right from them: “The backlog of cases at the” Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario “began to increase significantly after the” Conservative “government came into power and failed to reappoint or retain experienced adjudicators and then failed to make new appointments. When the government did start to appoint new staff,” the staff they appointed “had little or no expertise in human rights law.”

So it’s not just that it was bad already, but it seems like it was set up to fail. They starved it out, and as they started bringing people back, the people showed up going like, “I don’t know.” Maybe that’s one of the reasons that this bill has stuff in it that’s already a law, because those people were like, “I don’t know; it sounds good.” But they should be experts in it, and they’re not.

I know it can feel frustrating to have someone come up here and say, “Hey, look, you wrote a law that’s already a law,” and have multiple examples, but I’m pointing this out because telling people, “This is a law,” is not the solution; enforcing the law is the solution. There have to be some consequences for it.

The next one that’s already a law is wage theft. I asked this already to the Minister of Labour, about wage theft. In schedule 2 it says that employers cannot withhold, deduct, or require money to be returned in situations where a customer of a restaurant, gas station or other establishment leaves without paying. Fun fact, Speaker: This is already prohibited. It’s in the Employment Standards Act.

I think if you’re going to be the Minister of Labour, you should read the Employment Standards Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Ontario Labour Relations Act, because—this is section 13. It’s right at the beginning of the Employment Standards Act. It’s already prohibited to steal wages from your workers. It’s already prohibited, if someone dines and dashes, if someone doesn’t pay for gas and drives away—it’s already prohibited to do this. It’s already illegal to do this. It’s just not enforced. So saying, “Hey, there’s a law and, also, we’re going to write a second law to remind you that it’s illegal,” is not going to do anything to these employers who are doing this unscrupulously.

My colleague from Mississauga–Malton had the bill about gas-and-dash, and I debated it with him in the last term, and he had made the amendments in the second term. I remember speaking to the bill. I had a lot of notes, and I could have filled the entire time. I said, “It’s a good bill and he has addressed the concerns we had,” and I sat down because there were colleagues who wanted to speak. The core of that, really, is that where it came from is, employees were getting killed because they were jumping on the back of trucks, trying to stop them from driving away with gas. They weren’t doing that because they’re superhero employees. They’re doing that because it’s a minimum wage job and someone is stealing 80 bucks worth of gas, and it’s going to come out of their pocket because their employer is ripping them off; their employer is doing something illegal.

As public servants representing our ridings—each of us has about 100,000 people, give or take—we cannot look the other way when employees are being ripped off. And quite frankly, Speaker, the Conservative government cannot tell people they have workers’ backs if they are looking the other way about this. And this is not a little amount. There was a freedom-of-information that was done earlier last year—I’m trying to see if it was the year before. It was in 2021; sorry. In 2021, they found that there was \$9 million in wages owed to Ontario’s workers. That is not chump change—nine million bucks that was owed to workers that their employers stole from them.

I don’t want to mince words on this. This isn’t an accounting error. This isn’t an accident. This isn’t one of those things where they forget to put your hours in and they fix it later. This is when they say, “Oh, someone took gas from me. You’re responsible for it”; “Oh, someone stole something on this shift, so you’re going to pay for that ring”; “Someone had dinner here and they took off, so now you’re going to pay for the steak that you didn’t eat”—which is illegal. Every one of those examples is illegal. And it’s \$9 million, just out of what they know

about. That's from people who come in and report it. It's probably much higher than that. Nine million dollars is a lot of money.

What's shocking and frustrating and should make all of us angry is that nothing was done to return this money. We know—all of us in government—through freedom-of-information that \$9 million was stolen from workers, and there's nothing in this bill or the three previous Working bills that does a thing for any of these workers to put that money in their pocket.

So don't tell me that you have their backs, because you don't in this case, and one of the reasons you don't is that in 2014 there were 18,000 employment standards investigations. In 2021, that dropped by 10,000 investigations, by more than half, to only 8,000 investigations. I don't think that you didn't need to do investigations. I think that if we do enough freedom-of-informations, we'll find out that

there aren't enough inspectors and that they're not out enough.

I want to go back again, because I know the time is going to end, and it will be a good place to stop—but these are three examples in this schedule of things that are already laws, that are already existing, that are stealing money out of pockets of people, that are taking advantage of vulnerable workers, that are being allowed—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member from Sudbury and I apologize to the members in the House. I know we are having a lovely time this evening, but unfortunately, it is now midnight.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The House stands adjourned until 10:15 a.m. on Monday, November 20.

The House adjourned at 2359.

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| Fife, Catherine (NDP) | Waterloo | |
| Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC) | Elgin—Middlesex—London | Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|---|
| Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC) | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord | Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales |
| Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC) | York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston | Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme |
| Fraser, John (LIB) | Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | |
| French, Jennifer K. (NDP) | Oshawa | |
| Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC) | Newmarket—Aurora | |
| Gates, Wayne (NDP) | Niagara Falls | |
| Gélinas, France (NDP) | Nickel Belt | |
| Ghamari, Goldie (PC) | Carleton | |
| Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC) | Milton | Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives |
| Glover, Chris (NDP) | Spadina—Fort York | |
| Gretzky, Lisa (NDP) | Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | |
| Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC) | Brampton East / Brampton-Est | |
| Hardeman, Ernie (PC) | Oxford | |
| Harden, Joel (NDP) | Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre | |
| Harris, Mike (PC) | Kitchener—Conestoga | |
| Hazell, Andrea (LIB) | Scarborough—Guildwood | |
| Hogarth, Christine (PC) | Etobicoke—Lakeshore | |
| Holland, Kevin (PC) | Thunder Bay—Atikokan | |
| Hsu, Ted (LIB) | Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles | |
| Jama, Sarah (IND) | Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre | |
| Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC) | Dufferin—Caledon | Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre |
| Jones, Trevor (PC) | Chatham-Kent—Leamington | Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement |
| Jordan, John (PC) | Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston | |
| Kanapathi, Logan (PC) | Markham—Thornhill | |
| Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP) | Parkdale—High Park | First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Ke, Vincent (IND) | Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord | |
| Kernaghan, Terence (NDP) | London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord | Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC) | York Centre / York-Centre | Solicitor General / Solliciteur général |
| Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon Andrea (PC) | Barrie—Innisfil | Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement |
| Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC) | Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre | |
| Leardi, Anthony (PC) | Essex | |
| Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC) | King—Vaughan | Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation |
| Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC) | Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek | Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport |
| MacLeod, Lisa (PC) | Nepean | |
| Mamakwa, Sol (NDP) | Kiiwetinoong | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| Mantha, Michael (IND) | Algoma—Manitoulin | |
| Martin, Robin (PC) | Eglinton—Lawrence | |
| McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC) | Durham | Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises |
| McCrimmon, Karen (LIB) | Kanata—Carleton | |
| McGregor, Graham (PC) | Brampton North / Brampton-Nord | |
| McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB) | Beaches—East York | |
| Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC) | York—Simcoe | President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones |
| Oosterhoff, Sam (PC) | Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|---|---|
| Pang, Billy (PC) | Markham—Unionville | |
| Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC) | Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill | Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires |
| Pasma, Chandra (NDP) | Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean | |
| Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC) | Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud | Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences |
| Pierre, Natalie (PC) | Burlington | |
| Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC) | Timmins | Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines |
| Quinn, Nolan (PC) | Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry | |
| Rae, Matthew (PC) | Perth—Wellington | |
| Rakocevic, Tom (NDP) | Humber River—Black Creek | |
| Rasheed, Kaleed (IND) | Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville | |
| Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC) | Kenora—Rainy River | Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones |
| Riddell, Brian (PC) | Cambridge | |
| Romano, Ross (PC) | Sault Ste. Marie | |
| Sabawy, Sheref (PC) | Mississauga—Erin Mills | |
| Sandhu, Amarjot (PC) | Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest | |
| Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC) | Brampton South / Brampton-Sud | Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports |
| Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC) | Glengarry—Prescott—Russell | |
| Sattler, Peggy (NDP) | London West / London-Ouest | |
| Saunderson, Brian (PC) | Simcoe—Grey | |
| Schreiner, Mike (GRN) | Guelph | |
| Scott, Laurie (PC) | Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock | |
| Shamji, Adil (LIB) | Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est | |
| Shaw, Sandy (NDP) | Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas | |
| Skelly, Donna (PC) | Flamborough—Glanbrook | Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Smith, Dave (PC) | Peterborough—Kawartha | |
| Smith, David (PC) | Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre | |
| Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC) | Parry Sound—Muskoka | Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts |
| Smith, Laura (PC) | Thornhill | |
| Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC) | Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte | Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie |
| Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP) | St. Catharines | |
| Stiles, Marit (NDP) | Davenport | Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario |
| Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC) | Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre | Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure |
| Tabuns, Peter (NDP) | Toronto—Danforth | |
| Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC) | Mississauga—Streetsville | Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises |
| Taylor, Monique (NDP) | Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain | |
| Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC) | Scarborough—Rouge Park | Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports |
| Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC) | Huron—Bruce | Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |
| Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC) | Vaughan—Woodbridge | Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances |
| Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC) | Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington | |
| Vanthof, John (NDP) | Timiskaming—Cochrane | Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|--|
| Vaugois, Lise (NDP) | Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord | |
| Wai, Daisy (PC) | Richmond Hill | |
| West, Jamie (NDP) | Sudbury | |
| Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC) | Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre | Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes |
| Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP) | Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | |
| Yakabuski, John (PC) | Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke | |
| Vacant | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | |
| Vacant | Lambton—Kent—Middlesex | |